The Case of the 'Forgotten Hostages' ■ Who Needs Sunday Magazines?

JOURNALISM SUREVIEW

JULY/AUGUST 1986 • \$2.75

NASA and the spellbound press

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Mon.

Tues.

Thurs.

The week we looked terrorism in the eye and proposed a way to make it blink.

Its face has grown familiar. In the endless images of twisted wreckage and shattered bodies left scattered in its wake.

It claims to work for many causes, but wields only one tool—violence. And its target is you. Your family, your children, your life. The face of terrorism. It's become a major force in our world, and Newsweek has detailed its violent development. But we didn't stop there. Because when Newsweek looks at a story, we see beyond the face of it.

Beyond the problems, or the

Fri.

situations, or even the motivations—we see and search for solutions. Recently, we proposed 10 concrete steps designed to combat terrorism. Among them: improved intelligence gathering, cracking down on unsafe airports and greater pressure on terrorist allies. Wed.

Sat.

That's our prescriptive approach to the news-reporting not only what's happening, but what can be done about what's happening.

And over the years, we've applied that prescriptive approach to such varied and difficult dilemmas as civil rights, Vietnam, South Africa and crime.

Reporting the bad news and suggesting good answers. Part of the reason Newsweek's won's more awards for journalistic

excellence than any other news magazine.

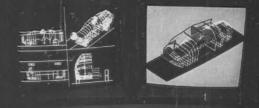
And a good reason for you to start taking a look at the world through our eyes.

Newsweek. Why it happened. What it means.

DESIGNING GM BYTE BY BYTE.

Designing General Motors to become the first 21st century corporation means going back to the drawing board and looking at ourselves in the light of a new age: the Computer Age.

It means thinking in a new mode, accessing the future in a daring, creative new way.
Our goal? A sleeker, more streamlined, computer-driven GM—an organization powered by technology, fueled by brainpower, and outclassing all competition. Our inventive use of computer technology in design, engineering, manufacturing, and safety is producing a GM programmed for quicker response to our customers, better efficiency and outstanding performance. A GM designed to bring you into the future. Byte by byte.



THE GM ODYSSEY: SCIENCE NOT FICTION GM

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- INFORMATION PROCESSING CENTER: Electronic Data Systems control center helping to streamline data processing and telecommunications functions, enabling General Motors to become more responsive to its customers' needs.
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- MULTIMATCH. Machine vision system used in various quality-control procedures that increase manufacturing quality and productivity.
- NUMERICALLY CONTROLLED ROBOT PAINTERS. These robotic spray painters provide consistent, high-quality paint finishes on GM automobiles.

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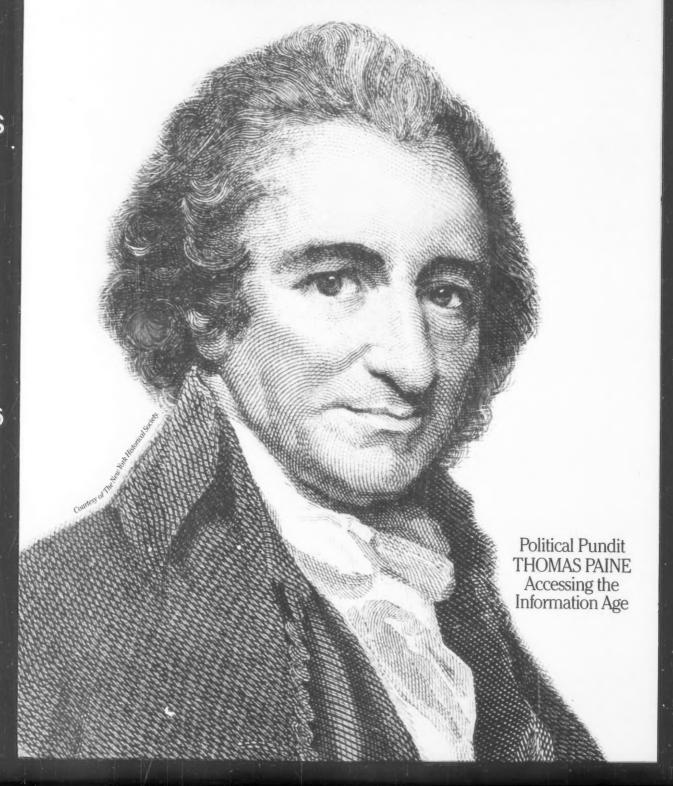
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A STORY OF TELESIS.



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Common Sense, together with Paine's later essays—The Rights of Man, The Age of Reason and others, today stand as a testimony not only to the power of the ideas they contain, but also to the power of the printed word itself.

"Without the pen of Paine," John Adams said, "the sword of Washington would have been wielded in vain."

Today, in this age of information, a free press has a greater ability than ever to educate, to inspire and to be the voice of common sense. But keeping up with a vast and rapidly changing store of information also presents today's journalists with greater challenges than ever. This is particularly true for those who follow the fast-paced telecommunications industry, where new legal and technological developments are happening almost overnight.

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CHRONICLE

All fish, no flush

Recently, a female sportswriter trying to assert her right to cover a story came up against a sportsmen's society that claimed a higher right — that of bathroom privacy.

The showdown occurred at a big-time bass-fishing tournament called MegaBucks in which the top winner could walk away \$101,000 richer. The place was the central Florida town of Leesburg; the month, April; the issue, a floating porta-potty barge. The sportswriter was Cheryl Gordon of *The Orlando Sentinel*.

Gordon, who had covered the fishing competition all week, learned from a tournament underling that tournament officials wanted a journalist to ride in the boat of each of the ten finalists to monitor their fishing and later report the event firsthand. Good story, said Gordon, and told her editors to expect a slice-of-life feature on a professional angler fishing for a fortune. That was before she ran afoul of Harold Sharp, tournament director of the

couldn't share a boat with an angler

because there would be no place for

testants with whom she didn't ride.)

in a Florida fishing tournament

him to go to the bathroom in

privacy. (Right: one of the con-

Bass Anglers Sportsmen's Society, or B.A.S.S. Women are not allowed to fish in the tournaments or ride in the boats, he said on the eve of the finale — a day of fishing from 6 A.M. to 4 P.M. He cited a 1978 decision in which a New York court ruled that women could be excluded from competing in bass-fishing tournaments if no toilets were available. Gordon's presence, Sharp said, would violate the fishermen's right to "sexual privacy."

No problem, Gordon countered. Sharp had told the press and fishermen that B.A.S.S. was renting a porta-potty barge for the last, long day of competition. The floating potties anchored in the middle of the lake should assuage the qualms of modest sportsmen, she said. Sharp's response was to cancel the potty boat. Why? "I don't have to explain why," he told Gordon.

According to Gordon, when she asked when the rules discriminating against women

would be changed, Sharp replied that this would take time. How much time? There will never be enough time, he replied.

The Sentinel became indignant. If the tournament wouldn't let Gordon cover the story, said regional editor Bill Skutt, the newspaper would bar the other Sentinel writer assigned to the tournament from riding in a bass boat. "This is good ol' boyism at its worst," said Skutt. Sentinel columnist Bob Morris used the issue to mock Sharp and the "MegaBucks bladder-busting" tournament.

Other sportswriters covering the event concurred in thinking that B.A.S.S. behaved badly. John Bowman of the St. Petersburg Times, who had been considering covering the event from one of the bass boats, decided to stick to the sidelines when he heard that Gordon would be prevented from writing her story. "It was bush league," he said. "I think it's going to be a real point of contention next year."

To Washington Post sportswriter Angus Phillips, who learned of the banning at the day's end, the decision of the tournament directors was petty and absurd. A 1978 court decision, he pointed out, shot down similar arguments that barred women from baseball locker rooms. "These guys were denying her the right to do her job fairly and squarely," Phillips said. "It's ridiculous. But then they're country boys and just not comfortable with free-spirited equality."

Sharp said he did not intend to discriminate against Gordon or other women; he was, he said, simply trying to protect the civil rights of the fishermen. A woman in a bass boat would handicap fishermen. No fisherman would waste precious minutes rowing over to a potty barge or to bank his boat and hunt for a bush. He would simply relieve himself over the side — unless a woman was on board.

Gordon's offer to turn around and shut her eyes would not suffice, he said. "They would have to act like gentlemen all day." Furthermore, a man confined all day with a woman in a small boat could succumb to other compelling urges. "It's just not a healthy situation," he said.

Sharp said that B.A.S.S. would never change its mind on the matter, adding that



Eileen Samelson

Three of the nation's most prestigious journalism awards...

THE PULITZER PRIZE.

Chicago Tribune
Editorial Page Editor,
Jack Fuller,
has received the
1986 Pulitzer Prize
for Editorial Writing,
the Tribune's
third Pulitzer
in the past
four years,
and its
twelfth
overall.

THE ROBERT F. KENNEDY AWARDS GRAND PRIZE.

The Chicago Tribune received the Robert F. Kennedy Award for outstanding coverage of the problems of the disadvantaged, with its series The American Millstone. The series won first prize in the print journalism category, and the Grand Prize. from among all media winners.

THE SIGMA DELTA CHI DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD.

The Society for Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi, awarded its Distinguished Service Award in the Washington Correspondence category to James O'Shea and Nicholas Horrock of the Tribune's Washington Bureau for their series on charges of waste and fraud among Pentagon contractors.

A great city deserves a great newspaper.

Chicago Tribune

women would be excluded from bass boats at next year's tournament as well.

Skutt of the Sentinel says that the fundamental right of a newspaper to choose which reporters cover the news is at stake. If females are banned from sitting in a bass boat at next year's MegaBucks, the Sentinel might not cover the event and might take legal action, he adds.

Another paper that might go along with a boycott if women are again barred from the tournament boats is the local *Leesburg Commercial*. "The tournament is big news here," says editor Mike Archer, "and we covered it like a blanket. But we can't let them manipulate us."

The irony is that B.A.S.S. was touting this tournament as a spectator event worthy of big-time press coverage. Bass fishing, immensely popular in many parts of the country, has never received much play in the sports pages and B.A.S.S. officials said the

time was ripe for wider attention. "They're underdogs and they want to be stars," Skutt says. "Discriminating against female reporters can only hinder their efforts."

Gordon, who this year reported on the winners from the shore, says she wants to cover the event next year out on the water where the action is.

Barbara Stewart

Barbara Stewart is a reporter at The Orlando Sentinel.

The other war in El Salvador

Just past dawn on April 8, the Salvadoran army launched a lightning raid on the village of Arcatao, high in the rugged hills of northern Chalatenango Department. Its mission was to capture three "foreign mercenaries" reported to be there accompanying a band of guerrillas.

That same morning, Tod Robberson, the Reuters correspondent in El Salvador, the BBC's Catherine Matheson, and Reuters photographer Juana Anderson awoke in a farmhouse in Arcatao where they had spent the night. Suddenly, two A-37 jets screamed overhead and began dropping bombs. Three or four helicopters appeared, their machine guns firing into the town. Bullets ricocheted inside the hut, people outside ran in panic, and a few minutes later a soldier kicked open the door and ordered the three reporters out at gunpoint.

The army soon realized it had made a mistake: the three were not mercenaries, but foreign journalists duly accredited by the Salvadoran armed forces. Nevertheless, their film, tape cassettes, and notebooks were confiscated.

Ten hours later, in San Salvador, the three were handed over to a delegation from the Salvadoran Foreign Press Corps Association (SPCA). Their notes, which had been photocopied by Army Intelligence, were returned to them. The film, however, was not returned — new rolls were given to Anderson to replace those "misplaced." The tape cassettes were returned later, after they had been transcribed.

The head of military intelligence, Colonel Orlando Zepeda, defended the confiscations on the ground that the army was entitled to know what information might have reached the guerrillas via the reporters. The SPCA informed the Inter-American Press Association in Miami, which responded with a telegram to Salvadoran President Jose

Napoleon Duarte protesting the incident.

The affair underscores the obstacles the army places in the path of journalists trying to cover the six-year-old Salvadoran civil war. The risk is particularly great for reporters who enter, without official permission, what the military calls "conflict zones." In fact, in this highly mobile guerrilla war, there are no fixed battle lines. Conflict can occur virtually anywhere. The military's policy of categorizing any area it chooses as a conflict zone is viewed by many reporters as a pretext to deny them access to the guerrillas.

Last year, several incidents reinforced this impression: reporters travelling in cars visibly marked "TV" were strafed from the air; others, obviously unarmed "gringos," were fired on by soldiers as they walked in the open.

Early this year, another incident strained relations between foreign journalists and the armed forces. In February, Raoul Shade, a British free-lance photographer, was arrested by the army outside a town in a rebel-frequented area sixteen miles from San Salvador. Both his film and his military press credentials were confiscated.

Shade was then handed over to the Treasury police in the capital, where he was interrogated. Two days later, after a representative of the International Red Cross happened to notice him and informed the British chargé d'affaires, he was released and told he had three days to leave the country.

At a meeting with Shade and three SPCA representatives, a top military intelligence officer said the photographer's crime was that he had entered a conflict zone without permission. A further concern, he said, was the belief by the army that some reporters routinely carry information to the guerrillas when they go into the field. Nevertheless, because of the SPCA's intervention, the armed forces relented, returning to Shade his film and his press ID and allowing him to remain in the country.

A reason often given by the military for limiting press access to operational areas is

Living at risk: Journalists Juana Anderson (in striped shirt), Catherine Matheson, and Tod Robberson, shown here in San Salvador, were attacked by Salvadoran armed forces while reporting in a remote guerrilla-controlled area.





FOR MEDIA EXCELLENCE

Individual Awards

VALERIE BARNA, Madera Tribune HOPE BELLI, Salinas Californian GENE CHACON, KQMS Radio (Redding) PATRICIA DAIGLE, West County Times (Pinole) BETTY DOTY, Salinas Californian STEVE FIORINA, KGTV (San Diego) MICHAEL GOUGIS, Herald American (Southgate) DAVID GREENWALD, Orange County Register ROBIN HINCH, Long Beach Press Telegram SCOTT LA FEE, San Diego Evening Tribune DAWN LIVINGSTON, KLON-FM Radio (Long Beach) BARBARA PALERMO, Daily News of Los Angeles STEVE PETIX, Daily Californian FRANK RICE, San Marino Tribune ROBERTO ROBLEDO, Salinas Californian MELINDA SACKS, Palo Alto Weekly LYNN STEINBERG, Daily News of Los Angeles

Media Awards

Daily News of Los Angeles KGO TV (San Francisco) KNX Radio (Los Angeles) KPBS-TV (San Diego) KRON-TV (San Francisco) KSEE TV (Fresno) KXOA Radio (Sacramento) Neighbors, a Sacramento Bee supplement Orange County Register Yucaipa & Calimesa News-Mirror



The John Swett Awards are named for the founder of the California Teachers Association, who was also the state's first superintendent of public instruction. The Awards bonor individual journalists, newspapers, journals and broadcast stations for outstanding coverage of public education issues. Nominations for the awards are made by local CTA affiliates, but the judging of the entries is done by a panel of professional journalists.

> California Teachers Association An Affiliate of the National Education Association

Marilyn Russell Bittle President

Ralph Flynn Executive Director

Ned Hopkins Director of Communications "physical risk." The military usually cites as a "lamentable example" of what can happen to those who refuse to heed its orders "the four Dutchmen" — the four Dutch journalists who were killed by the army in 1982 at a remote rendezvous point with the guerrillas (see "The Four Dutchmen and the Forgetful Press," CJR, July/August 1982).

Since those days, the military has stopped viewing the foreign press as an arm of the guerrillas. But the old antagonism persists, and it can surface ominously when foreign reporters dig too deeply, too close to home.

On the night of April 9, two armed men were waiting in the shadows for UPI correspondent Douglas Farah when he returned to his apartment in San Salvador. "As I got out of the car," Farah recalls, "both men moved several steps toward me and pulled back their windbreakers to reveal pistols in their shoulder holsters. Then they moved up to either side of my jeep as I got out and stared at me. All the while, no one said a thing. Then one guy motioned to the other with his head and they got in the car and pulled off fast."

A few days before, Farah had broken the story that a kidnap-for-ransom ring in which several high-ranking military officers were believed to have taken part was being investigated by Salvadoran police.

On April 10 he had followed up with a story containing new details, among them that two officers had been detained in connection with the investigation and that some of the ring's members were suspected of death-squad activities. That afternoon Farah's apartment telephone was cut off, although he had paid his bill. He and his wife decided to move into a hotel.

Two nights later, they returned to their apartment only to be awakened at about midnight by a car radio playing full blast on the street below. From his window, Farah saw the same car. "Two men were leaning against it," he recalls, "and two were walking up and down our driveway, looking under our garage door and main entrance door. They yelled some obscenities up towards the apartment, then got in their car, screeched their tires, and left."

Farah had already notified officials in the Duarte government and the U.S. embassy of the incidents. "They said it was probably harassment aimed at intimidation and that no physical violence was likely, but that . . . we should let people know where we are at all times and be ready to pack up and leave the country if we felt endangered."

That visit was the last. Farah believes the harassment ended only because the U.S. embassy and the Duarte government took steps to stop it. "I think certain people were talked to," he says.

Farah's experience points up the difficulties confronting newsmen covering the kidnap case — the first case in which the military is investigating and preparing to prosecute its own officers for crimes committed while on active duty. The army's sensitivity to criticism has led to several run-ins with the press. When a local news agency published the names of several of the officers in custody, the report elicited a barrage of statements by the military denouncing "the irresponsibility of the press."

A few days later, Miami Herald correspondent Tim Golden was upbraided by the military for the headline on his story about the abduction ring: SALVADORAN SOLDIERS BY DAY, THEY WOULD KIDNAP BY NIGHT. President Duarte wrote an open letter criticizing the article. The following week, after filing a story reporting that the rebels' Radio Venceremos had named two more high-ranking officers as being implicated in the kidnap case, the local Agence France-Presse reporter was called in for interrogation at military headquarters.

It was hoped that the founding of the SPCA
— a highly visible, organized group —
would compel the military to stop treating
the press as an enemy. So far, however, this
tactical move has been only a partial success.

Jon Lee Anderson

Jon Lee Anderson recently completed two years as a reporter for Time in El Salvador and Honduras. For part of that time, he was president of the Salvadoran Foreign Press Corps Association. Juana Anderson, the Reuters photographer mentioned in this article, is his wife.

The Washington Post

Washington Post reporter Michael Weisskopf during his stint as Peking bureau chief

A missed Pulitzer?

It's every journalist's dream, winning the Pulitzer Prize. Most will never be nominated; fewer still will be chosen; more rarely yet will a journalist be nominated and then removed from consideration before the jurors vote. This, however, is what happened to journalist Michael Weisskopf, who was nominated in a January 29, 1986, letter from Washington Post managing editor Leonard Downie to the secretary of the Pulitzer board for his highly acclaimed series on family planning in China in 1985, written while Weisskopf was Peking bureau chief.

As best the story can be pieced together (no one at the *Post* will talk on the record), Weisskopf's chance to win the Pulitzer ended abruptly in late February for reasons having nothing to do with the originality, authenticity, or impact of his three-part account of a pattern of involuntary sterilizations and coerced abortions in China's population-control programs. The trouble began when clips of two articles on an entirely different subject

— the Packard commission report on management of the defense program — arrived in the *Post* newsroom. One article was from the Baltimore *Sun*; it was published on February 12 and was written by Charles Corddry. The other, from the *Post*, appeared on February 19 and was written by Weisskopf, who was then back in the U.S. and covering defense. The anonymous sender had underlined many similarities in the two pieces.

Both reporters had obviously touched base with many of the same sources. Many of the same points were made in both accounts, and there were other likenesses, ranging from similar synopses of the story of the Sorcerer's Apprentice to the use of the word "trenchant." The call to the Pulitzer Prize board office in New York requesting that the nomination of Weisskopf's China reporting be withdrawn was made in late February, according to the Pulitzer staff.

As some Washington Post staff members see it, managing editor Downie and executive

Is the watchdog really a lapdog?



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Is America's watchdog in danger of becoming a lapdog? Send your view on this and other press issues to our Chairman, Robert Erburu, Times Mirror, Times Mirror Square, Suite 100, Los Angeles, CA 90053.

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CHRONICLE

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The Peter Kihss Award Fund for the City of New York 419 Park Ave. South, 16th Fl. New York, New York 10016 (212) 689-1240 editor Benjamin Bradlee "over-reacted" or "panicked," fearing that if Weisskopf won the coveted prize for his China series, questions of plagiarism arising from his recent defense-beat pieces would surface, tarnishing the *Post*'s reputation as it had been tarnished by Janet Cooke's notorious Pulitzer Prize-winning story about "Jimmy's World."

These same sources say that, initially, Downie and Bradlee planned to fire Weisskopf, despite widespread expressions of support for the reporter by members of the national desk, from assistant managing editor for national news Robert Kaiser on down. On February 25, the Post ran a "clarification" saying that Weisskopf's piece should have credited an earlier piece in the Sun. Afterward, however, Weisskopf, using dated interviews and notes entered into his computer, was able to show that he had done the reporting himself. The bulk of the story, a source says, was in the computer before Corddry's piece appeared; the week's delay in publishing Weisskopf's piece, this source adds, came about because one editor was away and there was an intervening holiday - Washington's Birthday, on February 17.

By the time Downie and Bradlee had mulled over Weisskopf's explanation and had heard what other editors had to say in his defense, it was too late to do anything about the Pulitzer Prize. The question remained: What would management do to Weisskopf? The actions taken were curiously ambiguous. Weisskopf was suspended for a week without pay but the *Post* stopped short of firing him. "That's as close as you will come to getting any admission that the first reaction was wrong," says one *Post* writer.

But if Weisskopf was punished, he was also rewarded. He had asked to be taken off defense, a beat he did not like, and assigned to environment. The transfer went through. "You can bet," says one source, "that if they believed of Weisskopf what they believed in the beginning, that he had plagiarized, he wouldn't be covering environment for this paper. He would have been fired."

How did editors at a paper whose Watergate triumph came about in large measure because it trusted its reporters leap so quickly to the conclusion that Weisskopf had violated their trust? "Very few people talk to each other around here," says one *Post* writer by way of explanation. "If they had called Weisskopf in right away and talked to him, none of this would have happened."

Downie, who in his nominating letter had praised Weisskopf for his "courage as well as skill," would not comment on the withdrawal of the nomination except to say that it was part of a "larger, internal personnel matter." Downie played down the importance of the whole affair, saying, "A lot of reporters don't ever get nominated for the Pulitzer," which, of course, is exactly why having a crack at it and then having the nomination withdrawn is so wrenching.

A mystery remains. Who sent the clips to the *Post*'s editors? Charles Corddry of the *Sun* says he doesn't believe anyone at the *Sun* sent any clips to the *Post*. He certainly didn't. "I don't know how it happened," says Corddry. "The *Sun* never protested to the *Post* as far as I know."

Margaret Carlson

Margaret Carlson is a free-lance writer who lives in Washington.

The Korean connection

When the Korean Federation of Los Angeles and twenty-eight local Korean-American organizations recently issued a "declaration of conscience" calling for the "democratization" of South Korea and an end to U.S. support for the "autocratic government" of President Chun Doo Hwan, the story was front-page news in the Los Angeles Times. The federation, which serves the largest Korean community in the United States, had never before criticized Chun's military-backed government.

The story, however, like many others about the opposition in South Korea, did not appear on the local Korean-language TV news. "We cannot cover all the movements of political figures," explains Jhang Gil

Song, executive managing director of Korean Television Enterprises, Ltd., which produces Korean-language news and other programs for KSCI-TV of San Bernadino. "I wonder whether all the Korean people in Los Angeles want to [support] the movement to reform the Korean constitution."

Song's attitude is not surprising. KTE, a Los Angeles-based corporation formed in 1983 specifically to reach southern California's 250,000 Koreans, is owned by KBS Enterprises, Ltd., a subsidiary of the Korean Broadcasting System, which is itself owned and strictly controlled by the South Korean government.

Last March, KTE registered with the Department of Justice as a foreign agent fi-

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nanced and controlled by a "foreign principal" and engaged in the "preparation or dissemination of political propaganda." According to the company's registration statement, it currently receives \$33,000 a month from KBS Enterprises.

KTE's sudden admission of its South Korean connection came after an ad hoc group of Los Angeles-area Korean immigrants formed the Korean-American Free Press Committee and asked the Justice Department to conduct a criminal investigation of the company's activities. Working with the Center for Development Policy, a think tank based in Washington, D.C., and the Media Access Project, a public-interest law firm specializing in communications issues, the committee claimed that KTE was violating the Foreign Agents Registration Act by failing to disclose its ties to KBS and the South Korean government.

A companion complaint filed with the FCC alleges that KSCI, an independent station which airs twelve hours of KTE and KBS programming a week for an annual fee of nearly \$1.5 million, has violated the Communications Act, FCC regulations, and other laws by failing to identify the South Korean government as the true sponsor of its Koreanlanguage programming. The complaint, which is still pending, also alleges that KSCI knowingly allowed KTE to broadcast propaganda and failed to exercise adequate control over its programming. It asks the FCC to force KSCI to identify the South Korean sponsorship and to consider revoking KSCI's broadcast license.

KSCI officials deny all wrongdoing and insist that it is no secret to Korean-Americans in Los Angeles that KTE and KBS are connected to the South Korean government. "It's clear that the supplier is KTE, or in some cases KBS," says the station's attorney, Michael Basile. "The Korean people know when they are watching KBS that it is funded by the government, just like the BBC in England."

From the beginning, however, according to documents filed with the FCC by the Korean-American Free Press Committee, South Korean government officials and KSCI executives were sensitive to the implications of a foreign government's participation in the U.S. media. More than three years ago, they signed a proposed agreement stating that the involvement of KBS should "appear to be minimal to the general public in order to avoid the impression of foreign intervention in local U.S. broadcasting." They also acknowledged implicitly that KTE would broadcast propaganda: its programs, they agreed in another document on file with the

FCC, would encourage viewers to "develop an understanding of their mother country today, and to further contribute to the development of goodwill between Korea and the United States."

According to KTE's registration statement, twelve television companies across the U.S. now use its programming. At least one station, WNVC-TV of Fairfax, Virginia, which broadcasts to Washington, D.C., has begun notifying viewers that its Korean-language show "contains material supplied by the Korean Broadcasting System, a broadcast service of the government of the Republic of South Korea."

KSCI, however, continues to broadcast KTE and KBS news without any such acknowledgment and KTE continues its selective presentation of local events. Last spring, two Korean-American organizations began circulating a petition calling for constitutional reform to allow direct election of the South Korean president. The petition drive paralleled a similar campaign in South Korea and, to the surprise of many local Koreans, attracted the support of some conservative Korean churches. But KTE has not reported the story. "We were [unsure] whether most of the Korean people in Los Angeles wanted to [sign] the petition or not . . . so we didn't report it," says Song, KTE's executive managing director. "The government is the most reliable organization in Korea," he adds, insisting that, despite its registration as a foreign agent, KTE operates independently.

Meanwhile, the Korean Broadcasting System is under fire at home. There, confronting what they see as the network's pro-government bias, a powerful Christian organization and the major opposition party are organizing a boycott.

Frank Clancy

Frank Clancy is a free-lance writer who lives in Los Angeles.

AIDS and the obits

In the past five years, over eleven thousand Americans have died of AIDS. But readers would never guess that from scanning the obituary pages of newspapers in those cities hit hardest by the epidemic.

The New York Times has cited acquired immune deficiency syndrome as a cause of death in only a handful of obits. The Miami Herald has run only one account of a death attributed to AIDS. And only in the last year or so has the Los Angeles Times begun to include references to AIDS on its obituary page. "It's incredible," says New York gay

activist David Rothenberg. "They say in articles that it's killing all these quote, homosexuals, but nobody dies of AIDS in the obits. No people. . . . The remarkable thing about the Rock Hudson case was that he was a person [who died of AIDS]," he adds. "Without that connection, people just don't have a sense of loss."

That missing connection, Rothenberg and other gay activists argue, makes it easier for the general public to forget about the severity of the AIDS epidemic, thereby hampering efforts to obtain greater funding for support programs and research. (Similarly, antismoking activists have for years complained that obituaries too often fail to specify lung cancer as a cause of death.)

Why have the nation's papers been so reluctant to mention AIDS even after sufferers have succumbed? Part of the answer lies in the way newspaper obituaries are prepared. Editors routinely scan the paid death notices looking for people worthy of a story the following day. After running the names through the library's clipping files, reporters must call the deceased person's family to verify the cause of the death. Often forced to confront grieving parents, reporters say they usually take explanations at face value, even if their instincts tell them they are not getting the truth. "The family's already got enough problems," says Belinda Brockman, obituary writer at The Miami Herald. "I don't need to make it worse. If they tell you it's pneumonia, we'll say it's pneumonia."

Other reporters are a little more aggressive. "You'll get a guy thirty-six and they'll say he died of pneumonia," says Los Angeles Times obituary editor Burt Folkart. "Technically they're right. But he wouldn't have died of pneumonia if he didn't have AIDS." Alert to the more than 1,600 cases of AIDS reported in Los Angeles, Folkart now presses the point. Given a moment to think it over, he says, some family members will tell him that AIDS was to blame. But if they choose to keep the cause of death shrouded, Folkart says, he lets it go at that.

Of the nation's dailies, only the San Francisco Chronicle has tried consistently to say when AIDS is responsible for a death. On at least one occasion, the paper decided, against the wishes of his family, to name AIDS as the killer of a prominent man. "We had been running all these stories trying to remove the stigma from AIDS," Chronicle reporter Randy Shilts says, "and I think we all saw that not printing it in obituaries would utterly contradict our policy as a news organization." Shilts, one of the few openly gay reporters on a major daily, contends that stories on the obit page should be reported with the

same aggressiveness as a page-one story. "People need to know. Obituaries are for the readers, not for the deceased person's friends or family."

But relying on sources outside the family to establish cause of death opens the newspaper to a host of dangers, says Bill Luce, deputy news editor at *The New York Times*. "Say [some guy doesn't] like you," Luce says. "[He] could just call and say you died of AIDS. So we'd have to check through some doctors and hospitals to find out if it

were true. But we don't like to go around in these things acting like detectives.'' (As the *Times* recently reported, physicians often choose not to list AIDS as the cause of death—not only out of consideration for the families of the deceased, but to avoid the possible withholding of insurance payments.)

Some gay activists caution against blaming families or news organizations for the blackout. "Are we expecting parents to become activist in a moment of grief?" asks Virginia Apuzzo, former director of the National Gay

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Task force. But others say the obit policy is absurd. "It's become a joke among gay men," says Rothenberg. "You see a young designer who died after a long illness. We know what it is. The press is perpetuating stupidity."

Homosexuals say they've become accustomed to reading between the lines. They look for pneumonia, cancer, meningitis, or encephalitis — the diseases most often connected with AIDS — as hints of the cause of a young man's death. For the cognoscenti, there are other tip-offs. Certain funeral homes for example, are known for accepting AIDS victims.

But sometimes one doesn't have to read between the lines; one simply chooses which lines to read. Thus, in 1983, Paul Jacobs, the pianist and harpsichordist for the New York Philharmonic and an internationally respected authority on contemporary music, died of AIDS in the gay press but after a "long illness" in *The New York Times*.

Similar double obits have appeared in other cities. But even editors of gay newspapers sometimes avoid attributing AIDS as a cause of death. Indeed, the stigma of having lost a lover or family member to AIDS may loom larger than fear of having that person exposed as a homosexual. One family threatened to sue the Philadelphia Gay News, not for writing an obit eulogizing their son as a prominent member of the gay community, but for saying that he died of AIDS. "The press continues to commit a great disservice by hiding the fact that people are dying of AIDS," says PGN editor Stan Ward. "And we have to hide it too, because we're afraid of being sued." Alexis Jetter

Alexis Jetter is a free-lance writer who lives in New York.

Putting Qaddafi on hold

Last April 14, at around 4 P.M., as American bombers, fighters, and flying tankers were fueling up before taking off to attack Tripoli and Benghazi, veteran Italian journalist Enzo Biagi was asking Libyan leader Muammer el-Qaddafi, "Colonel, are you afraid that the Americans may attack any minute?"

"There is absolutely no reason why they should," replied Qaddafi, who, as Biagi recalled later, was "strangely calm."

Two hours later, Biagi and the small crew of *Spot*—a weekly news magazine broadcast by RAI, the Italian state television network—left Tripoli with the filmed interview of Qaddafi. A Libyan fighter escorted their rented Mystère 20 part of the way back to



Spiked: Italian TV journalist Enzo Biagi (right) completed an interview with Libyan leader Muammer el-Qaddafi just hours before U.S. planes attacked. But Biagi's bosses put it on the shelf.

Italy. Eight hours after the interview, American bombs rained down on Qaddafi's residence of El-Azziziya, a few yards away from where Biagi had talked with the Libyan leader. Twenty-one hours later, sitting in a Milanese restaurant with RAI news director Albino Longhi, Biagi learned to his consternation that the interview, scheduled to be aired later that day, was not going to be shown. That evening's edition of *Spot*, Longhi told him, was to be preempted by the evening news.

"I keep asking myself exactly why it happened," says Biagi. One of the best-known broadcast journalists in Italy, the avuncular Biagi, sixty-six, is no stranger to controversy. "There is a parliamentary inquiry after almost every edition of *Spot*," he says with a shrug. "In other countries, political power and newsgathering are separate. Here they are part of the same institution."

Politics has always been complex in postwar Italy, which is now governed by a fiveparty coalition. But relations between politics and television are even more complex. For years two parties - the Christian Democrats and the Socialists - have each controlled one of the two nationwide evening news programs broadcast on state television, while the Communists, Republicans, and Social Democrats squabbled over the local news on a third channel. When a controversial subject such as Libya is in the news, the situation becomes even more politically charged. Italian companies have nearly a billion dollars in contracts with the government of Libya and thousands of Italians were living and working there at the time of the American attack. (Many have since left.) Consequently, the Italian government doesn't quite know how it feels about its southern neighbor. The Ministry of Defense, for example,



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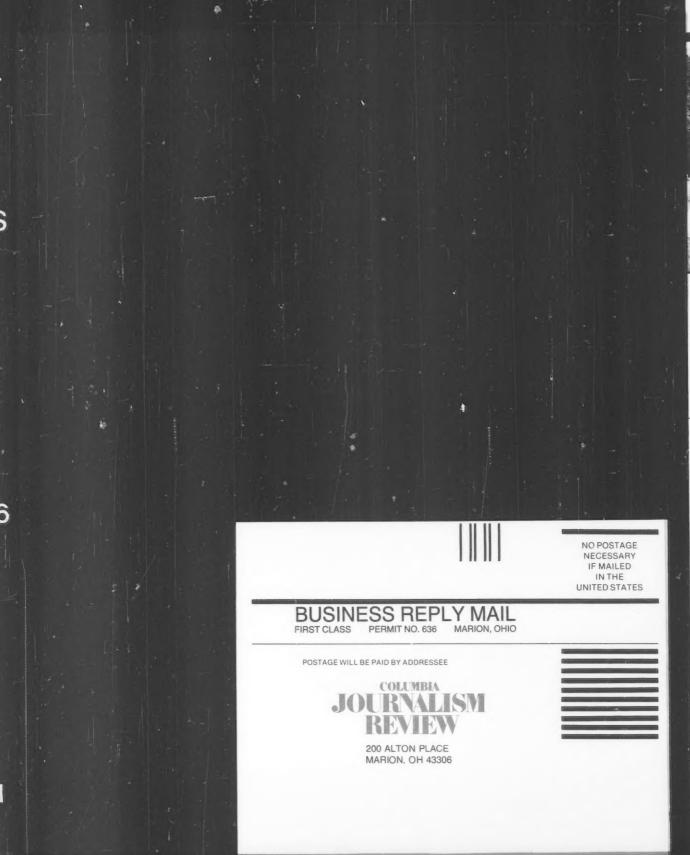
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is pro-American, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is decidedly friendly to Libya.

Word of Spot's cancellation first came in a phone call from RAI's general manager in Rome, Biagio Agnes. "Dear Albino," Agnes wrote to news director Longhi in a letter that followed, "I read in the newspapers and wire reports that Biagi interviewed Qaddafi just before the American raid. I appreciate that this is a remarkable document and must not be

lost, even though the evening news tonight, due to the exceptional events [in Libya] will be much longer than usual . . . and will . . . take up the usual time slot of *Spot*. You can certainly use the interview soon in another context. Warm regards."

Biagi and several other Italian journalists believe that the decision to hold the interview was made at an executive meeting of the five-party government in Rome the morning after the raid. "I think it was considered inopportune to broadcast an interview in which Qaddafi seems calm and reasonable," says Andrea Purgatori, editor in chief of the Rome edition of the national daily Corrier della Sera. "It was felt that if Italy broadcast the interview, we would look complacent toward Libya."

The interview itself is unexciting. Qaddafi is not entirely frank. ("Obviously, there are no problems between Libya and America," he says.) But he scores high marks as a prophet ("An attack on Libya would be an attack on our cities, our streets, our children"). At times he indulges in mudslinging ("Reagan has some difficulties in reasoning. I am sure that if a psychiatrist examined him, he would certify that something is missing"). But he is not inconsistent ("We will not abandon the Palestinian cause, even if we should be

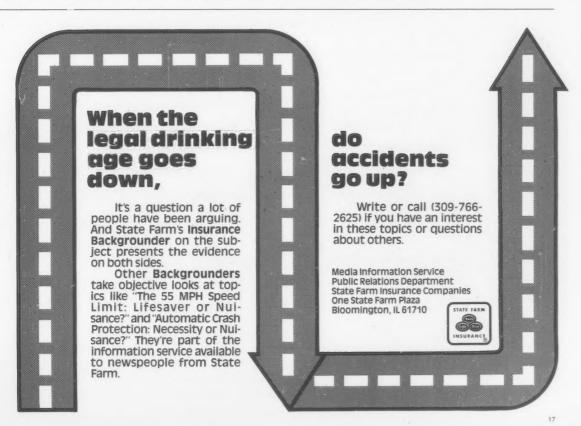
attacked by Martians or inhabitants of some other planet, and not Americans'').

Although the government allowed the interview to be aired on the next edition of *Spot* a week later, Biagi, Purgatori, and other Italian journalists were dismayed. "It is extremely grave that the government should block the broadcast of an interview of burning interest," Purgatori says. While Biagi's interview sat on a shelf at RAI, Purgatori points out, readers were snapping up issues of *Corriere della Sera* featuring a nearly five-year-old interview with Qaddafi by Oriana Fallaci. "If I look at this case," Purgatori adds, "I must confess that it is not possible to have objective journalism on state television."

There are privately owned television stations in Italy but they are forbidden by law to link together as networks — a major obstacle to broadcast journalism. A bill that would remove this restriction is before the parliament. But, says Biagi, "There is no such thing as journalistic freedom. In private television, too, a certain amount of power is wielded by the advertiser."

Antony Shugaar

Antony Shugaar is a free-lance writer who lives in Milan.



COMMENT

The Casey offensive

The press may eventually look back on the curious events of May 1986 as the early-warning signs of a significant change in press-government relations. Having sought for five years, through legislative, judicial, and executive action, to shut off the sources of "unauthorized" government information, the Reagan administration at last turned to the principal recipients of those leaks — the press. May's "Casey initiative," undertaken by William J. Casey, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, consisted of threats to prosecute news organizations for printing or airing allegedly secret information, combined with informal pressure that on at least one occasion came from the Oval Office itself.

Casey chose an obscure vehicle for his offensive. The law he cited is formally designated Title 18, Section 798, of the U.S. Code. It forbids publication of information about codes, communication intelligence devices, communication intelligence activities, and intercepted communications of foreign governments. A little-known cousin of the Espio-

nage Act, unlike its more eminent relative it offers prosecutors the advantage of not having to prove intent to harm the United States. In its thirty-six years on the books, Section 798 has rarely risen to visibility. Only once has it been suggested that it might be used against news organizations. In 1971, in the final opinions in the Pentagon Papers case, Justice White said that he would have no trouble upholding convictions if the government were to choose to prosecute newspapers under the section.

But Section 798 otherwise gathered dust until 1986. On May 2, huddled with top editors of *The Washington Post*, Casey announced that he was convinced that five news organizations, including the *Post*, had violated the law. This meeting, it became clear later, was one of a series of tactical moves designed to persuade the *Post* not to publish material emerging from the Ronald Pelton espionage case. President Reagan was enlisted in this campaign and on May 10 he telephoned Katharine Graham, chairman of the board of the Washington Post Company. She later described the con-



versation, in which the possibility of prosecution was mentioned, as "low-key" and "civilized." The newspaper responded by deferring publication for more than two weeks and, when it ultimately published the story on May 21, by deleting two or three paragraphs. NBC, meanwhile, had had the temerity to air a story on "Ivy Bells," a submarine eavesdropping program also related to the Pelton case; the network was promptly threatened with prosecution.

The Post, despite the concessions it had made, was still not out of Casey's line of fire. After opening statements had been made in the Pelton trial, the paper published a detail about the site of a listening device that had not been mentioned in court. This led to a strange joint statement by Casey and Lieutenant General William E. Odom, head of the National Security Agency, warning reporters covering the trial not to add details not mentioned in testimony or to speculate about testimony because such details and speculation "are not authorized disclosure and may cause substantial harm to the national security." Again, the threat of prosecution was far from subtle.

Where does the Casey initiative lead? Those who look for a simple, direct answer say that Casey is trying to use Section 798 as a kind of Official Secrets Act (the seventy-five-year-old British law that purportedly makes British journalists writing on national security matters keep a tooth-brush on their persons in case of sudden arrest). The less simple answer is that the Casey initiative — like other administration assaults on open government — will seem to overreach, will apparently pull back, but, most important, will in the meantime have achieved its objectives.

In this case, the success seemed clear enough even before any retreat. Casey had demonstrated that he could censor The Washington Post, or at least compel it to censor itself - a victory that executive editor Benjamin C. Bradlee refused to acknowledge, except when he seemed to protest too much that his professional "balls" were still intact. "In this game, you have to prove you've got balls every day," Bradlee told a Boston Globe reporter, adding that he hadn't "made a career out of bowing to candy-ass pressure. . . ." Bradlee's dismissal of the Post's deletions as "a couple of technical paragraphs, the useful social purpose of which is really up for argument" was similarly unconvincing. His stance in 1986 was spookily reminiscent of the Post's when, in 1979, the paper argued editorially that no public interest was at stake when the government sought to prevent The Progressive from publishing a highly technical article about the H-bomb (see "Does The Progressive Have a Case?" CJR, May/June 1979).

More significant than Casey's effective campaign against a single newspaper has been his success in legitimizing the national security criterion in the handling of news. One noticeable indicator was the austere silence maintained throughout May by the editorial page of *The New York Times*, which seven years ago had boldly insisted that the government's case against *The Progressive* was based on political policy, not national security. What seemed blindingly evident then has now, it appears, become obscure.

Judging by the curious events of May, it would seem clear that, combined with government efforts to shrink the scope of reporting (as in official complaints about NBC's interview with the terrorist Abu Abbas), the Casey initiative represents a far more subtle and dangerous threat to the already dubious independence of the press than those posed by the more blatant assaults of the Nixon-Agnew era.

Warren Burger's flimsy case

Warren Burger's retirement removes from the Supreme Court a foe of broadcasting the court's proceedings. Paying more heed to precedent than to logic, in early March the court rejected a request for permission to broadcast — live, on radio — oral arguments on the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings budget-balancing law. The chief justice sounded peevish when he turned down the request, made by the Mutual Broadcasting System, writing: "When you get cabinet meetings on the air, call me!" As even a high-school civics student could have pointed out, closed-door cabinet meetings are in no way analogous to open high-court sessions.

The chief justice had the chance to make a more persuasive argument when, in April, he addressed the annual meeting of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. However, the case he made there was even flimsier. Declaring that airing the court's proceedings would be like ''putting . . . a judicial proceeding [on] in a stadium,'' Burger said that the public ''would have nothing but a distorted conception of what goes on in the court unless you put on the entire proceeding.'' Mutual had, in fact, proposed to do just that — ''uninterrupted and unedited'' — but Burger fretted that bits and pieces might find their way onto the airwaves. Therefore, his argument went, the only prudent course was to deny every broadcaster everything.

As Burger must surely be aware, the Supreme Court countenances less than verbatim coverage of its work all the time. Newspapers almost never run the full texts of oral arguments and even the nation's newspaper of record — The New York Times — rarely, if ever, publishes Supreme

Court opinions in their entirety. Virtually all reporting about the court, then, is "distorted." Burger's position amounts to an untenable double standard for Supreme Court coverage inasmuch as it requires only *broadcasts* of actual proceedings to present all or nothing.

This was too much for Justice William Brennan, who in an interview several days after Burger addressed the nation's editors said that he "strongly favored" televising and broadcasting oral arguments. Two other justices — Thurgood Marshall and John Paul Stevens — later joined Brennan in objecting when the court, urged by seven journalism groups to reconsider Mutual's proposal, refused to do so.

The chief justice's worry that broadcasting might misinform the public is ironic in view of the obstacles the court places in the way of accurate reporting. No reporter or other court spectator is allowed to tape-record any part of the court's proceedings. Transcripts of oral arguments are made available within seven days, but the transcripts do not identify which justice is speaking.

he usual argument against allowing cameras and microphones in courtrooms is that their presence might influence witnesses and jurors and affect the outcome of the trial. But in appellate courts — including the Supreme Court, which hears the nation's most important appeals — these considerations are irrelevant. In a courtroom where judges, not juries, hear the arguments and where no witnesses testify, the presence of cameras and microphones offers maximum benefit at minimum risk.

In his ASNE address, Chief Justice Burger went on to urge the editors to tell the story of the Constitution to help commemorate the document's bicentennial. That story is, of course, an unfolding one, and no institution plays a more important part in it than the Supreme Court. Restricting access to high-court proceedings to those Americans who can afford to travel to Washington is no service to the Constitution and brings no credit to the court.

Justice Brennan surely is right in saying that broadcasting of the court's doings is "inevitable." It would be nice if the justices would choose to regard next year's observance of the bicentennial as the appropriately symbolic time to invite the American people to observe the Constitution — and the high court — at work.

GILBERT CRANBERG

Gilbert Cranberg was editorial page editor of The Des Moines Register from 1975 to 1982; he now teaches journalism at the University of Iowa.

Darts and laurels

Dart: to the Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, *Times Leader*. After giving page-one play on March 26 to a self-serving report that its paid circulation had for the first time topped that of the rival *Citizens' Voice* (''[Editor a. d publisher] Richard L. Connor said the *Times Leader*'s editorial excellence . . . had made the . . . leap possible''), the paper devoted its sole editorial on March 27 to an even more self-serving, 832-word justification of the previous day's report.

Dart: to the Chicago news media, for giving the cold shoulder to a hot story in their own front yard - the unanimous decision by the normally fractious city council to declare Chicago, where the world's first self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction took place in 1942, a nuclear weaponfree zone, thus making it the largest U.S. city, among some hundred others, to legally ban "the design, production, deployment, launching, maintenance, or storage of nuclear weapons or their component parts" within the city limits. Although, as reported by the alternative Chicago Reader in its March 21 story YOU READ IT HERE LAST, news reports about the March 12 passage of the ordinance were carried the following day by The New York Times, The Washington Post, AP, and UPI (not to mention a Japanese news service and Tass), the local television stations and the Chicago Sun-Times ignored the council's action, while the Trib gave it two paragraphs inside its Chicagoland section, at the tail end of a story on ward elections.

Laurel: to the L.A. Weekly and the Easy Reader, alternative papers in Los Angeles, and investigative reporter David Steinman, for the salutary disclosure that much of the presumably safe fish sold in Southern California markets is just as contaminated with DDT and PCBs as the sport fish so strongly warned against in signs posted along the Los Angeles county coast by the California Department of Health. Based on FDA files netted through the Freedom of Information Act, obscure reports compiled by the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project, and a chemical analysis of samples by a private laboratory jointly commissioned by the two papers, Steinman's report alerted consumers to the hazards posed by regular consumption, even in moderate quantities, of locally sold white croaker, mackerel, swordfish, red snapper, and cod - and to the fishy guidelines established by the FDA under pressure from the industry. (And a Mini-dart: to the Los Angeles Times, for an ungenerous piece drawn from Steinman's catch that duly credited Steinman but failed to mention the papers that sponsored his report.)

Laurel: to The Orlando Sentinel, and reporters Rosemary Goudreau and Alex Beasley, for a long overdue checkup on the medical malpractice crisis in Florida, which has the highest paid doctors, and the highest malpractice insurance premiums, in the country. Based on a nine-month examination of state documents, insurance-pool records, and malpractice suits filed in Orange County Court, as well as on interviews with some 150 doctors, lawyers, insurance representatives, hospital administrators, state officials, politicians, and victims, the eight-part series (April 13-20) revealed, among other things, that only 3 percent of Florida's doctors accounted for nearly half the money paid to malpractice victims in the state; that frivolous claims - and multimillion-dollar awards - are rare; that malpractice claims are not increasing as fast as doctors and insurance companies say; that there is an oversupply of doctors; and that potentially harmful proposals for major changes in public policy are being based on exaggerated reports of damage to the medical profession and on doctored statistics supplied by the insurance industry. The Sentinel's prescription: stronger medicine for the small number of physicians who are responsible for much of the problem, and no radical surgery on the law.

Dart: to Long Island's *Newsday*, for filling five pages of prime space in its Sunday *Home* magazine with a designing piece by one Kimberly Greer in which, supported by five color photos and one in black and white, the author recounted in fond detail the cost and effort expended by herself and her husband in restoring their Long Island Victorian home. One detail not furnished by the April 27 feature was the fact that Greer is employed by *Newsday*, currently on its business desk and formerly on *Home*, and that the house had been sitting on the market for many months. Within days of publication, "the prettiest house on the block" had been sold — at what the real estate agent described as "close" to the \$289,000 asking price.

Laurel: to the San Francisco Examiner and reporter Seth Rosenfeld, for the timely disclosure that profits from a major Bay Area cocaine-smuggling ring had allegedly been used to finance Contra rebels fighting the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. Based on federal court testimony, sealed documents, government wiretap transcripts, and interviews with two convicted smugglers, Rosenfeld's copyrighted March 16 article was published only hours before President Reagan's televised appeal for public support for his proposed \$100 million aid package to the Contras, during which he accused the Sandinistas of smuggling narcotics into the U.S.

Dart: to the Savannah, Georgia, Sunday News-Press, and

its general manager, Don Harwood, for an over-obliging thank-you to Eastern Airlines for an enjoyable Argentine junket inaugurating its non-stop service from Miami to Buenos Aires — a full-page, extravagantly decorated, four-color article on the city's attractions (complete with center-page photo of an Eastern Airlines office) that carried Harwood's by-line. For a contrasting approach to travel writing, consider the case of Don Bluhm, of The Milwaukee Journal, who after the Mexico City earthquake in November was assigned to check out the major Mexican tourist centers at Journal expense. Upon learning in February of a contest being sponsored by the Mexican tourist industry to "reward outstanding press reports abroad which aided in clarifying the image of Mexico," Bluhm consulted with his section editor, submitted his December 6 package to the contest committee, and won a \$12,500 second prize - a prize which, after consultation with colleagues concerned about the appearance of compromise, he voluntarily renounced.

Laurel: to the *Providence Journal-Bulletin*, for its persistent scrutiny of the questionable activities of Joseph A. Bevilacqua, chief justice of Rhode Island's state supreme court. Bevilacqua's resignation on May 28, which followed censure by the state Commission on Judicial Tenure and Discipline last year and came in the midst of televised impeachment hearings by the House Judiciary Committee, climaxed an eighteen-month saga that began in 1984 with the *Journal-Bulletin*'s story detailing the judge's associations with people tied to organized crime.

Dart: to North Idaho Sunday, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, for its unreserved coverage of the opening of The Coeur d'Alene, a local resort complex developed by hotel magnate Duane Hagadone, who also happens to be the paper's chairman of the board. The Sunday's May 4 edition indulgently accommodated some 245 column-inches of text, photos, boxes, and commentary about North Idaho's "dazzling," "resplendent," and "brightest jewel," including the lead front-page story, the lead business-section story, and the entire editorial page, which consisted of a single celebratory editorial, six man-in-the-street interviews, and adjoining "opinion" pieces about the resort by the manager of the Coeur d'Alene branch of the First Interstate Bank and the vice president of the local chamber of commerce. The redcarpet treatment also included a page-one profile of the "hardworking," "caring," "sensitive," "generous," "tenacious," "thorough," and "demanding" Hagadone, who besides being known for his "integrity," "honesty," "charisma," "vision," and "commitment to excellence," is also reportedly "lots of fun."

THE \$10,000 EUGENE C. PULLIAM

EDITORIAL WRITING FELLOWSHIP

The Sigma Delta Chi Foundation is accepting applications for the Eugene C. Pulliam Fellowship, a grant of \$10,000 awarded annually to an outstanding editorial writer to help broaden his or her journalistic horizons and knowledge of the world through travel or study.

The 1986 Pulliam Fellow may use the tax-free award to cover the costs of study in any field at a university or college, or to cover the costs of travel in the United States or abroad, or to cover the costs of a combination of study and travel.

A panel of distinguished, veteran journalists will select the recipient of the Fellowship, based on an analysis of the applicant's writing skills, of the educational value of past editorials, and of a prospectus on how the study or travel the applicant proposes would help the writer better serve the reading public.

To qualify for the Fellowship, applicants must have at least three years' full-time editorial writing experience.

Applications for the Fellowship must include *each* of the following: 1) a one-page personal biography; 2) a summary of professional experience; 3) five samples of editorials [a series may count as one editorial]; 4) a prospectus on how the Fellowship will be served and how it will make the applicant a better editorial writer; 5) a letter of endorsement from the applicant's employer; and 6) a black-and-white photograph suitable for publication. Entries should be sent to the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation, which sponsors the Fellowship, at the address shown below.

The deadline for applications is September 12, 1986.

The Fellowship honors the memory of Eugene C. Pulliam (1889–1975), who was publisher of *The Arizona Republic, The Phoenix Gazette, The Indianapolis Star, The Indianapolis News, The Muncie Star, The Muncie Evening Press,* and the *Vincennes Sun-Commercial.* Pulliam was one of ten DePauw University students who in 1909 founded Sigma Delta Chi, now The Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi. Today, more than 20,000 journalists are members of SPJ,SDX.

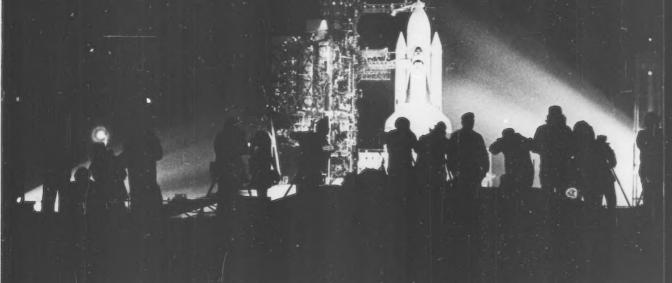
The Fellowship was made possible through a grant from Mrs. Eugene C. Pulliam.

Sigma Delta Chi Foundation

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NASA and the spellbound press



Randy Taylor/Sygma

Dazzled by the glamour of man-in-space, the press kept ignoring hints of the disaster to come

by WILLIAM BOOT

It is January 28, 1986 — a bitterly cold morning at Cape Canaveral. The countdown clock is ticking as seven astronauts aboard the space shuttle Challenger prepare for launch. Among them is Christa McAuliffe, the New Hampshire high school teacher who is set to become the first ordinary American in space.

Several hundred miles north, in Atlanta, a Federal Express messenger delivers an envelope to the headquarters of Cable News Network, the only TV network set to cover the "routine" launch live. The countdown continues as shuttle commander Dick Scobee and pilot Michael Smith run through their preflight checklist.

T minus 25 minutes and counting. CNN is broadcasting a live progress report from the Cape when the anchorwoman in Atlanta suddenly breaks in: "We have an important an-

nouncement about the space shuttle. A panel of engineers from Morton Thiokol, which designed the craft's solid-fuel rocket booster, has unanimously urged NASA to scrub this morning's launch. According to a company memo provided to CNN, the rocket experts are afraid cold weather might cause problem-plagued rocket-booster parts called O-rings to malfunction, allowing hot gases to burn a hole through the booster. This, the experts say, could cause a catastrophic explosion. Incredibly, NASA is still going ahead with the launch."

The wire services, monitoring CNN, file urgent bulletins quoting the network report. NASA is besieged with calls, including one from the White House. At T minus 15 minutes, NASA announces a "hold" in the countdown and shortly thereafter reports that the mission has been scrubbed . . .

antasies along these lines have gone through the minds of more than a few journalists in the months since Challenger's fatal explosion: If only someone had alerted them to the rocket-booster problems; if only history had a rewrite man. As William Broad, a *New York Times* reporting veteran of many shuttle launches, told me: "Clearly, knowing what we know now, if [journalists had] really dug into it they might have been able to save seven lives. Standing back, it looks like the whole edifice was rotten to the core."

The edifice, NASA, was until January 28 generally seen by the press as an exemplary federal agency — the one that put men on the moon without major cost overruns while the Pentagon was squandering billions. But in a scramble to scrutinize the space agency after the shuttle disaster, news organizations have shattered NASA's pristine image, uncovering evidence that the agency was long aware of problems with the O-rings; that it rejected Thiokol engineers' launch-eve scrub recommendation; that it downplayed Oring problems for the sake of maintaining an unrealistically brisk launch schedule; and that it cut corners on safety in a number of other ways to lower costs while at the same time wasting billions of dollars through mismanagement.

Was the press remiss in not scenting the rot sooner and uncovering it in time to avert disaster? Space reporters tend to bridle at the question ("People are very quick to criticize in hindsight," Thomas O'Toole, who covered the space program for *The Washington Post*, says acidly) and to answer with a sharp "No!" It was not their fault, the reporters say, that no whistle-blowers came forward with dirt about the O-rings; without a whistle-blower to help, uncovering the O-ring danger would have been about as fortuitous as finding a needle in a haystack — without even knowing that they should have been searching for one.

Jim Asker, who covers NASA for *The Houston Post*, draws an analogy between space correspondents and police officers. "There are a lot more policemen than reporters across the country, and we don't expect them to catch all the criminals," he says. By the same token, we should not have expected the undermanned NASA press corps to come up with the O-ring story.

In a narrow sense, these defenses may be justified. Space reporters are indeed a small cadre. Few of them cover the shuttle full-time. And NASA, a close-knit bureaucracy, was not exactly rife with whistle-blowers before the accident. (Richard Cook, who recently spent seven months as a spaceagency budget analyst, calls NASA "an agency of yes men" fearful of jeopardizing post-retirement aerospace jobs.)

But to dwell on such excuses diverts attention from major flaws in shuttle coverage up until January 28 — shortcomings that have some bearing on the Challenger disaster. News organizations, which tended to assume that the spacecraft was relatively safe, nagged NASA about launch delays while paying little heed to a growing list of danger signs, from fuel leaks to failing brakes to engine accidents. They tended to assume that NASA was reasonably well run, de-



Astronaut Joseph P. Allen holds onto a stranded satellite during a November 1984 Discovery flight.

'In retrospect, the shuttle seems to have been one of the biggest con jobs in recent history. The press, infatuated by man-in-space adventure, was an easy mark'

spite much evidence to the contrary. Dazzled by the space agency's image of technological brilliance, space reporters spared NASA the thorough scrutiny that might have improved chances of averting tragedy — through hard-hitting investigations drawing Congress's wandering attention to the issue of shuttle safety.

There is also the small matter of press gullibility in the early days, when the shuttle grew from a gleam in NASA's eye into a costly test vehicle. The shuttle seems, in retrospect, to have been one of the biggest con jobs in recent memory — a craft without a clear purpose sold by NASA on the basis of wildly optimistic cost and performance projections. The press, infatuated by man-in-space adventure, was an easy mark.

Taking safety for granted

How safe did journalists assume the shuttle to be in the months before the Challenger blew up? Some space reporters insist that they realized all along that it was highly dangerous; that, as John Noble Wilford of *The New York Times* puts it, "Everybody knew sooner or later there'd be an accident." The *Post*'s O'Toole says a series of shuttleengine glitches had given him an uneasy feeling ("Something was amiss but we couldn't put our finger on it"), and Broad says he had taken to studying shuttle "abort modes."

Despite their worries, these reporters, like most of their colleagues, failed to make an issue out of shuttle safety. Wilford, in fact, wrote in May 1985: "The shuttle's safety . . . [is] not at issue." ABC national correspondent Lynn Scherr told me she could not convince her editors that shuttle launches were much more dangerous than 747 takeoffs. The prevailing complacency was epitomized by *Chicago Tribune* columnist Bob Greene, who wrote during Sally Ride's 1983 flight as the first American woman in space: "Although she's all that way out there, we feel we can talk casually about her because there's no doubt that she's coming back safely."

William Boot is a contributing editor of CJR. Nancy J. Needell, an intern at the Review, assisted with the research.

This sort of comment was, no doubt, music to the ears of NASA, which was busy selling the idea that the shuttle had made space flight routine — just as agency officials had promised it would; that the shuttle was not an experimental craft but a "truck" to lug satellites to and from orbit; that the risks of a trip aboard were so slight that even non-astronauts could fly — a Saudi prince, Senator Jake Garn, Representative Bill Nelson, and a schoolteacher. Their selection as passengers got considerable news play, reinforcing the image of a routine program.

The general press assumption that the shuttle was safe had a direct bearing on coverage of a significant trend — NASA's increasing difficulty in meeting its own tight launch schedule, thereby weakening America's ability to compete with overseas companies that are prepared to launch satellites with unmanned rockets. If the shuttle was safe, then the delays amounted to costly bumbling, which is how they were generally depicted. In fact, as we now know, the picture was more complicated: NASA faced pressures to meet its schedule and conflicting pressures to meet its safety standards — a dilemma which, if fully appreciated at the time, might have prompted reporters to question the entire program and to press for caution rather than to badger NASA about delays.

But badger they did. On the eve of the Challenger accident, for instance, Dan Rather opened his report with these words: "Yet another costly, red-faces-all-around space-shuttle launch delay. This time a bad bolt on a hatch and a bad-weather bolt from the blue are being blamed." The New York Times termed the episode a "comedy of errors" and ABC reported: "Once again a flawless lift-off proved to be too much of a challenge for the Challenger."

Such comments typified increased carping about NASA launch delays in the months prior to the accident, according to a survey of newspaper and television coverage conducted after the accident by David Ignatius, an associate editor of *The Washington Post*. Kennedy Space Center director Richard Smith went so far as to blame the press for "innetyeight percent of the pressure" to launch on that fateful morning. That contention may be extreme, but Ignatius argued in a *Post* op-ed piece that the press probably did put some pressure to launch on the publicity-conscious NASA. While the agency should not have been so concerned about its public image, Ignatius wrote, the news media, rather than hectoring NASA, "should have questioned whether the shuttle should have been launched at all."

Of dangers spotted — and warnings unheeded

Indeed, the media should have been asking that question — given that, over the years, there had been a series of conspicuous red flags pointing to shuttle unreliability.

Before the shuttle ever flew, two comprehensive and alarming critiques of its safety had appeared in reputable magazines — Science (November 23, 1979) and The Washington Monthly (April 1980). The articles argued that NASA, bowing to budget constraints, had taken safety shortcuts that called the whole program into question. Among these shortcuts was a decision by Rockwell International, the contractor developing the shuttle's main en-

gine, not to test each engine component separately but instead to simply bolt the parts together and turn on the power. This approach resulted in at least five major engine fires during tests. *Science's* R. Jeffrey Smith concluded that safety shortcuts had resulted in "a shuttle that many feel will be the most risky spacecraft ever launched."

The Washington Monthly's Gregg Easterbrook highlighted the dangers of shuttle flight, from the absence of crew-ejection seats to the extreme uncertainty of a successful emergency landing after an engine failure, to the dubious wisdom of reusing rocket components up to 100 times given "the fiendish forces of space flight."

Easterbrook wrote, with remarkable prescience: "Here's the plan. Suppose one of the solid-fueled boosters fails. The plan is, you die. . . . What if a billion-dollar spaceship wipes out on a 'routine' mission 'commuting' to space . . .? Would the public stand to lose a quarter of the fleet in a single day?" Conventional rockets, he argued, were a cheaper and more effective way to launch satellites.

A survey of the Nexis computer library indicates that neither Smith's nor Easterbrook's piece inspired spin-off articles in three major newspapers or in twelve magazines that cover space on a regular basis. In fact, their work was not so much as cited.

More red flags appeared after the shuttle began flying in April 1981 — alarming episodes which, according to a survey I conducted of six publications (Time, Newsweek, The Philadelphia Inquirer, The Christian Science Monitor, The New York Times, and The Washington Post) were reported only in a piecemeal fashion. Here are the episodes:

• December 1982. Fuel leaks in the shuttle engine were discovered, causing a Challenger flight to be scrubbed. NASA later disclosed that the leak could have created a "blowtorch" in the engine. Science magazine reported: "The leak could have resulted in a devastating explosion



'NASA was busy selling the idea that the risks of a trip were so slight that even nonastronauts

could fly'

Astronaut Sally Ride (left) who made the shuttle trip in 1983; and (below) passenger Senator Jake Garn in 1985.



between one and two minutes after the Challenger had lifted off." The incident got little news play, according to my survey.

• October 1983. NASA found a defect in the insulation of the shuttle's solid-rocket booster nozzles. The flaw could have caused flames to burn through the rocket's metal casing, causing a lethal explosion. There are only fifteen Nexis magazine and newspaper references to the episode (compared with 264 for Sally Ride's first flight).

• May 1984. The Air Force, backing out of a pact with NASA, announced that it would begin using conventional expendable rockets rather than the shuttle to launch some sensitive military satellites. Air Force officers said they were concerned about the shuttle's reliability and the possibility of accident. Coverage of this development was rather perfunctory, given its significance. A Nexis search revealed only eleven articles devoted to the subject, seven of them in specialized publications such as Aviation Week.

• April 1985. As Discovery swooped to a landing after its fourth flight, its brakes malfunctioned, wheels locked, one tire blew out, and another was shredded. Science magazine reported: "Had the lockups occurred earlier, when the shuttle was rolling more quickly, all four main tires might have failed, and disaster would have ensued." Nexis total for this incident: sixteen references.

There were three additional, startling episodes involving the shuttle's main engines:

• June 1984. Four seconds after engine ignition for what was to have been shuttle Discovery's first flight, a computer automatically aborted the takeoff while the spacecraft was still on the launch pad. A fuel valve had failed to open. Fire broke out and an explosion may have been narrowly averted.

• July 12, 1985. Challenger's main engines ignited but were shut down automatically three seconds before lift-off when computers detected a malfunction. Tension was high as hoses sprayed the engines to prevent fire and a possible devastating explosion.

• July 29, 1985. Six minutes after Challenger lifted off, an overheating engine shut down and the spacecraft barely made it into orbit. Had the engine shut down sooner or had a second engine gone out, Challenger would have been forced to try a highly dangerous emergency landing.

Each of these engine shutdowns got prominent play at the time, according to my survey, but they prompted little follow-through. A Nexis search in May unearthed eleven articles in which the words "shuttle" and "safety" appeared in the same headline — meaning that the article concentrated on accident risks. Of the eleven, only one had appeared before the Challenger explosion. It was an upbeat January 24, 1981, New York Times piece that ran under the headline ASTRONAUTS CERTAIN OF SHUTTLE'S SAFETY.

Most journalists were evidently just as certain that the space agency was being well managed. The pre-accident picture was of "an essentially smoothly running, trouble-free agency," as *New York Times* reporter Stuart Diamond wrote in a page-one exposé of NASA published last April 23, three months after the Challenger blew up. Citing audit reports obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, Diamond went on to disclose that NASA had in fact wasted



'More red flags appeared after the shuttle began flying in April 1981 — alarming episodes which were reported only in a piecemeal fashion'

billions of dollars over the years. The waste was directly related to safety because the space agency, at the same time it was squandering so many dollars, had been taking safety shortcuts in order to trim costs.

Many of the audits Diamond cited were several years old. They could have been acquired by reporters and publicized years earlier. Why weren't they? Diamond's explanation is that most reporters covering the shuttle were popularizers of science rather than investigators.

As with shuttle safety, the press virtually ignored a number of red flags which should have drawn their attention to the issue of mismanagement — major shuttle cost overruns, occasional General Accounting Office reports alleging NASA waste, and a stream of disclosures about the foibles of Pentagon aerospace contractors who also happened to have helped build the shuttle. Among these firms were Lockheed, of \$640 toilet seat fame, and General Dynamics, several of whose present and former executives (including James Beggs, who became NASA director in 1981) were indicted last year for illegally billing the Pentagon for cost overruns.

Shuttle economics and the gullible press

Going back to the late seventies and early eighties, when the shuttle moved from the drawing board to experimental flight, one finds a similar reluctance to question the economic soundness of the shuttle program. NASA was contending that the shuttle, manned and reusable, would be more cost-effective in launching satellites than existing, ex-



pendable unmanned rockets. NASA's cost estimates, based on projections that each shuttle would fly at least 100 times, were obviously a key selling point for the shuttle. Not all reporters were convinced, but in the euphoria following the first shuttle flight, news organizations including *The New York Times, Time*, and the AP cited the 100-flight figure as a given.

As time went by, NASA admitted that its projections had been optimistic and dramatically cut its projected launches per year. Stuart Diamond ultimately reported in his 1986 exposé that NASA chief James Fletcher, in a bid to ensure shuttle funding in the 1970s, had misled Congress and the public about the program's essential costs.

gain we come to the familiar red flags. There were many indications, long before the first shuttle flew, that NASA's launch goals were unrealistic and the projected program costs misleading. For instance, Gregg Easterbrook (along with Wayne Biddle in a 1980 New York Times Magazine piece and R. Jeffrey Smith in 1979 Science articles) used the space agency's own data and guesstimates by skeptical engineers to cast doubt on NASA projections. Easterbrook, in his unheeded 1980 Washington Monthly piece, estimated that the total cost of a shuttle launch would be \$105 million (compared with the original NASA projection of only \$28 million) — almost twice as much as the cost of launching satellites with existing, unmanned Delta rockets. It turned out that Easterbrook was being conservative. The actual cost per shuttle launch as of January 1986 was (in 1980 dollars) more than \$200 millior.

Space reporters did not, on the whole, take these cost criticisms to heart. Indeed, after the first launch in April 1981, news organizations asserted — illogically — that the shuttle's successful return to earth had in itself refuted the critics' claims. *Time* (January 4, 1982) declared: "Through-

out its long development, Columbia was plagued with troubles. . . . In the end, all that was irrelevant. Columbia had flown." AP deemed the shuttle's maiden flight "a remarkable recovery for a craft that only a few months ago critics were calling such unflattering things as 'space turkey' and 'aluminum dumbo." In fact, critics had not been questioning the shuttle's ability to fly so much as its efficiency.

Another criticism of the shuttle, given short shrift by most journalists, was that its astronauts could do little, if anything, of importance in space that machines could not do better. Expendable rockets, for example, could put satellites directly into distant, geosynchronous orbits. The shuttle could not, because its maximum orbit was too low. So it had to resort to a cumbersome two-phase operation, releasing satellites which then blasted further aloft using their own boosters.

NASA, however, insisted that people were essential to such tasks as plucking satellites from orbit and returning them to earth for repairs. That contention prompted critics such as James Van Allen, the noted astronomer, to point out that few satellites had low enough orbits for the shuttle to reach them. The shuttle could only climb to 500 miles, while many of the most important satellites were in geosynchronous orbit, 22,300 miles up.

Despite this marked limitation, the press went wild when a shuttle crew retrieved two satellites in 1984, comparing the space-walking astronauts to knights of old and generally accepting NASA's claim that a huge milestone had been passed. In a cover story pegged to the operation, *Time* gushed: "The mission was among the most spectacular in the 26-year history of the American space program. . . . [It] was 'the greatest event in space since Armstrong and Aldrin landed [on the moon],' declared a Houston flight director." (In a buried qualification more than two pages into the piece, *Time* noted that the shuttle's limited altitude range was a "major hitch.")

No contest: the press vs. the technocrats

Journalists, of course, have a vested interest in a manned space program. Man-in-space makes for a much more readable — or viewable — story than machines. The danger which many reporters long overlooked was that a manned system for launching satellites (including ones crucial to nuclear-attack warning and arms-control verification) was much more vulnerable than an unmanned system. If an unmanned rocket exploded, you could have a quick investigation and get on with launching. If a manned rocket exploded, the system could be grounded for years — as witness the shuttle.

Given that possibility, why didn't the press pay more attention to shuttle safety? O'Toole of *The Washington Post* replies that "until the explosion we had no accident to cover"— a blunt acknowledgment that news organizations are highly reactive by nature. They are not inclined to delve deeply into technical issues unless a catastrophe pushes them into it, making normally arcane data of compelling interest to the public. (Who would have believed, prior to the accident, that taxi drivers would be chatting about something called an O-ring?)

News organizations are, on the whole, quite reluctant to draw critical conclusions about technological systems, especially when those systems are championed by technocrats who presumably know what they are doing. In the case of shuttle malfunctions, Wilford of *The New York Times* says, "NASA always had the defense that 'it works' and our editors would also say, 'Yeah, they do have some problems with the equipment, but it works."

Journalists who did try to assess dangers associated with shuttle equipment prior to the accident speak of a layman's frustration in matching wits with experts. For instance, Houston Chronicle reporter Carlos Byars says he once tried to check out a claim of some astronauts that the danger of shuttle-tire blowouts (potentially fatal, you recall) was heightened because the Kennedy Space Center runway was too rough. He quizzed NASA engineers who had designed the runway. These experts insisted that it was not too rough. Byars was not entirely convinced, but felt he had to drop the matter. "I'm not equipped to debate the engineering of such a system," he told me.

Given this sort of reluctance, one is left with a sinking suspicion that, even had Thiokol's unease about the rocket-booster seals been disclosed to space reporters last year, the story might never have surfaced. NASA's experts would presumably have told inquiring reporters that the O-ring had repeatedly met safety standards. Who was a mere reporter to dispute this?

One answer, of course, is that the reporter would not be drawing technical conclusions — his expert sources would be. When "experts" disagree, a journalist is entitled, if not obligated, to bring the dispute to light.

Byars, in any event, says that his experience with the shuttle runway helped to sour him on technical investigations: "You can take any complicated system and 'what-if' it to death. . . . It's not real glamorous to write about tire problems."

Jim Asker of *The Houston Post* also admits that the glamour of space travel helped to divert reporters' attention from the safety issue. What most space journalists wanted to write about, and what their readers presumably wanted to read about, was the derring-do of dauntless astronauts (''looking like a modern knight-errant in shining space suit, [he] sallies forth into the darkness, powered by a Buck Rogers backpack,'' *Time*, November 26, 1984) and the sheer, untechnical marvelousness of the shuttle itself ('magnificent on the pad, a space age Taj Mahal that leapt into the sky on twin pillars of impossible bright yellow and blue flame,'' *Newsweek*, April 27, 1981). In pre-accident days, investigations of shuttle technology, even if they focused on potential dangers to the shuttle's crew, could not compete with this sort of lush sensationalism.

NASA and the power of the positive image

Beyond space reporters' technical insecurity and preference for glamour lay another impediment to criticism of NASA: the agency's powerfully positive image. It had been polished by the triumphs of Project Mercury and the moon landings and by the accolades of reporters themselves. U.S. News & World Report, for instance, once described NASA as a

One driving force in space reporting has long been a kind of technopatriotism. . . . For the news media. the shuttle became a symbol of U.S. technological redemption following an era of American malaise'

"concentration of mechanical and human genius."

"There is no question that the press was somewhat lulled by the many successes of NASA," John Noble Wilford of The New York Times admits. "The press somehow came to believe NASA was pretty-nigh infallible and [took] the shuttle program too much for granted. I plead guilty to that."

Stereotypes, of course, have a great bearing on how reporters weigh events and draw, or fail to draw, connections between them. In 1972, for instance, a prevailing (and largely justified) press stereotype was that George McGovern's presidential campaign (of Eagleton shock-treatment notoriety) was incompetent. Incompetence became the running theme. One day McGovern's plane was tardy by a mere fifteen minutes for a campaign stop in Portland, Oregon. The now-defunct *Oregon Journal* ran a headline in its next edition which read, as I recall it, McGOVERN ARRIVES A LITTLE LATE. Fifteen minutes! Hardly headline fare, one would have thought, but the example shows how a prevailing stereotype can affect the patterns which journalists

perceive. McGovern picked Eagleton as his running mate, he arrived late in Portland — all part of the mosaic of ineptitude.

By the same token, as shuttle reporting showed, an overpowering stereotype can cause reporters to downplay important facts or fail to make connections between them: NASA was highly successful, so shuttle engine shutdowns, brake failures, tire blowouts, fuel leaks, cost overruns must be of relatively minor significance. They were reported as isolated events, not perceived jointly as a mosaic of danger demanding investigation.

After the shuttle explosion, of course, NASA's positive image lay in ruins, and many facts about the space agency that reporters had known for years took on an entirely different coloration. The record of near-accidents and engine "glitches" and soaring costs suddenly seemed more sinister— a jolt in perception that brings to mind M. C. Escher's famous print of angels and devils. If the viewer concentrates on the white areas, he sees a pattern of angels. If he focuses on the black shapes, he sees a pattern of devils. News organizations, transfixed by NASA's angels before the Challenger explosion, are now seeing devils.

If you love something, you are naturally inclined to see the angels, and U.S. journalists have long had a love affair with the space program. In the pre-explosion days, many space reporters appeared to regard themselves as participants, along with NASA, in a great cosmic quest. Transcripts of NASA press conferences reveal that it was not unusual for reporters to use the first person plural ("When are we going to launch?"). Howard Benedict, the AP's veteran Cape Canaveral bureau chief, said in a lecture on the shuttle in 1984: "One has a feeling of . . . participating in the beginning of a truly great adventure" (WRITER LAUDS SPACE SHUTTLE FLIGHTS, Salt Lake Tribune, October 18, 1984).

And, of course, there was NASA's Journalist In Space competition, which, prior to the Challenger accident, had drawn 1,705 applicants (including me) eager, as the NASA form stipulated, to "share the experience of space travel." The contest elicited responses such as the following from former ABC correspondent Geraldo Rivera: "To beat through the air and clouds and sail through the vast ocean of vacuum, what must that be like?" Not much like investigative reporting, I wouldn't think.

That contest notwithstanding, reporters' self-interest was perhaps only a drop in the bucket of pro-NASA bias. Journalists, after all, comprised a cheering section for the space program long before there was any hope that one of them could bag the great cosmic assignment. In Project Mercury days, as Tom Wolfe observed, journalists lionized U.S. astronauts as single-combat cold warriors, airbrushed the physical imperfections from news photos of their wives, and refused to quote Chuck Yeager, the man who broke the sound barrier, when he derided pilot skills required of Mercury astronauts ("A monkey's gonna make the first flight").

One driving force in space reporting has long been a kind of techno-patriotism. As Wayne Biddle, a former *New York Times* technology reporter, puts it: "In our society, technological optimism is clearly a kind of religion, a matter of

faith." So it was on the space beat when the shuttle made its first flight. For the news media, the craft became a symbol of U.S. technological redemption following an era of American malaise. Give a listen:

- "It was a beautiful, exhilarating, uplifting ride. . . . It gave the nation welcome reason to rejoice: Whatever setbacks have been suffered in Iran or at Three Mile Island or in Detroit's auto industry, the United States is still master of high-tech ventures," New York Times editorial, April 15, 1981.
- "In the astonishing complexity of the craft's design, in its peerless performance, certainly in the cool performance of its astronauts possessors of what Tom Wolfe calls 'the right stuff' Columbia was a much-needed reaffirmation of U.S. technological prowess. . . . [Its] flaming power seemed to lift Americans out of their collective futility and gloom," Time, April 27, 1981.
- "The [astronauts'] heroism . . . lay . . . in their will-ingness to trust their lives to an untested craft, a faith in technology and sheer scale that many Americans wish they could recapture. . . . Last week all Americans had the right stuff again," Newsweek, April 27, 1981.
- "It was as if the space program had been reborn. . . . The military, scientific, and commercial possibilities of the space shuttle seem almost limitless," Washington Post news story, May 16, 1981.

t is difficult to knock a powerful symbol of what is "right" with America; most reporters were not predisposed to try, and those who were skeptical of the shuttle, such as Biddle, encountered editorial resistance. Biddle, who resigned from *The New York Times* in September 1985, out of frustration, he says, with his editors, recalls that "it was always an uphill battle to get articles critical of the shuttle into the paper. There was a great deal of resistance — a sort of corporate culture where you knew you were swimming upstream."

Until January 28, NASA was largely spared the sort of mainstream press scrutiny that Biddle (now with Discover magazine) wanted to give it. But on that grim morning, editors, in a catch-up frenzy, began throwing investigative reporters (many with little NASA experience) into the story -including Stuart Diamond and David Sanger of The New York Times and literally dozens of journalists at The Orlando Sentinel, The Miami Herald, The Houston Post, and other papers. The outsiders came up with a fair number of scoops, while many old-timers on the space beat found that their sources had dried up. ("I was really shut out," Wilford admits, and Thomas O'Toole of The Washington Post says ruefully: "People I'd known for fifteen or twenty years wouldn't talk.") It was a time for stocktaking in newsrooms around the country. O'Toole and Carlos Byars of the Houston Chronicle were ultimately moved off the space beat, and some new blood was injected.

The days of NASA as a journalist's sacred cow are presumably gone forever. It is sad that it took the deaths of seven astronauts to goad journalists into assuming the thoroughly skeptical role they should have been playing all along. Five Americans — including an AP reporter — are languishing somewhere in Lebanon.

What should the press be doing?

by LAURENCE ZUCKERMAN

n late April, Peter Kilburn, a native of Berkeley, California, was quietly laid to rest in the San Francisco National Cemetery near the Golden Gate Bridge. For seventeen months since the day he had failed to show up for work as the librarian at the American University in Beirut, Kilburn, sixty-two, had been held hostage. Two days after the American air attack on Libya in mid-April, he and two British men were found shot to death near Beirut. A note found with the bodies said the killings were in response to the Libyan raid.

Compared to the deaths of Leon Klinghoffer, the sole victim of the hijacking of the cruise ship Achille Lauro last fall, and Navy Seaman Robert Stethem, who was murdered by terrorists aboard TWA flight 847 last summer, Peter Kilburn's brutal death received little attention. When his body arrived at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland, reporters were told that they would not be allowed on the base to record the event - a marked departure from past practice on similar stories. And, while the White House went out of its way to comfort and console the families of Klinghoffer and Stethem, Kilburn's relatives were virtually ignored. "My uncle's death was an embarrassment to the administration," says Tim Kilburn, who often acted as the family's spokesman during the year and a half his uncle was a hostage.

If the Reagan administration was trying to distance itself from the least pleasant repercussion of the Libya raid, its strategy was successful. The Kilburn funeral was scarcely covered by the network evening news programs and was not even mentioned in the next day's New York Times, Washington Post, or Wall Street Journal.

To the friends and family of the five other Americans still captive in Lebanon, Kilburn's treatment was another example of the news media's spotty coverage of the country's longest-held hostages. Vivid memories of the saturation coverage of Americans taken captive from the U.S. embassy in Iran, from TWA flight 847 in Lebanon, and aboard the Achille Lauro make them wonder why the plight of their loved ones isn't played out before the nation in a similar fashion. "It's as if people are saying, 'Sorry fellas, you're not showbiz,' " says Peggy Say, whose brother, Associated Press chief Middle East correspondent Terry Anderson, was kidnapped on March 16, 1985, and is still being held.

Whether there should ever be a reprise of the frenzied crisis coverage of Iran in 1980 and Beirut in the summer of 1985 is a valid question. In the case of Anderson and the other hostages, however, news organizations have gone to the other extreme. For more than two years, an intricate domestic and foreign story with numerous angles and subplots has been treated as little more than spot news. Many angles have gone unexplored; administration policies remain unquestioned.

More than any other group, reporters and editors in particular should have a special interest in the story. Of the fifty-one foreigners who have been kidnapped in Lebanon since the beginning of 1984, twenty-one have been journalists. Yet.

news organizations have been accused of sitting on the story and not doing enough to get their men out (see sidebar, page 32). "I can't help but think that, as a news person, Terry has to end up feeling a little bit betrayed . . . by his colleagues," his sister says.

To be sure, the Lebanon hostage story has not been an easy one to cover. There was no single, visible dramatic event, like the hijacking of an airplane or cruise ship; instead, each of the Americans held captive has been grabbed on a Beirut street, bundled into a waiting car (almost always a Mercedes), and spirited away. Often the captors, in most cases shadowy groups of radical Shiite Moslem fundamentalists, are not heard from for weeks and then make demands and threats in anonymous phone calls to Beirut news organizations. Back in Washington, one of the principal tenets of the Reagan administration's official policy of "quiet diplomacy" is to discourage press coverage. Administration officials have rarely offered more than boilerplate assurances that they are doing what they

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Lost — and found: Still missing are (from left) Terry Anderson, AP Middle East correspondent; David Jacobsen, director of the American University of Beirut medical center; Thomas Sutherland, American University agriculture school dean; William Buckley, U.S. embassy political officer; and Rev. Lawrence Martin Jenco, head of Catholic Relief Services in Lebanon. American University librarian Peter Kilburn (right) was found shot dead after the American attack on Libya.



can. And the hostages' employers and families are routinely discouraged from speaking out as well, having been told that they might endanger the lives of the captives or upset some behind-thescenes maneuver.

At the beginning, for example, after Jeremy Levin, Cable News Network's Beirut bureau chief, was kidnapped in March 1984, journalist groups and reporters were actually discouraged by CNN from becoming involved. When the Committee to Protect Journalists contacted CNN a few days after Levin's disappearance, executives asked the group not to do anything on his behalf, explaining that the network had decided to keep quiet because it didn't want to "jeopardize the situation." Told by the administration and CNN that publicity might hurt Levin, many reporters laid off the story. As a result, after the first hostages were reported to have disappeared from the streets of Beirut, they virtually disappeared from newspapers and the evening news as well.

> The ransom: The hostages' captors are demanding the release of these seventeen Shiite Moslems imprisoned in Kuwait for the 1983 bombing of the U.S. and French embassies.

After several months of waiting with little word of progress, Levin's wife, Lucille, began to worry that her husband would be forgotten. In a pattern familiar to the hostages' families, she became increasingly disillusioned with the administration's policy of quiet diplomacy. "Everywhere we went, people knew nothing about it," she recalls. "I felt isolated and alone. I had given [the administration] every opportunity to do what [it] could. Nothing turned up. I didn't want to lose by default."

he turning point came in July 1984, four months after Levin was seized (and seven months before he escaped from his captors). The U.S. had received a videotape in which Levin addressed a message to CNN owner Ted Turner, spelling out the terms set by his captors. "My life and freedom," Levin said, depended on the "life and freedom" of seventeen Shiite Moslems who had been convicted of killing five and wounding more than eighty people in the bombing of the U.S. and French embassies in Kuwait in 1983. State Department officials showed Mrs. Levin the tape and asked her to verify that the speaker was indeed her husband. Weeks later, she says, when she asked whether the officials had shown the tape to Turner, they claimed that they were having trouble reaching him. Terrell Arnold, who was deputy director of the State Department's Office for Counter-Terrorism and Emergency Planning at the time, says, however, that the tape was withheld deliberately in order to avoid upsetting possible "indirect negotiations" with the captors. Later, according to Arnold, it was decided to "widen the circle" and at that time State Department officials sought out Turner and showed him and CNN executives the tape in early September. Mrs. Levin says

it was she who called Turner's office and told him about the tape. "From that moment, I realized that I would have to find the courage to do some things on my own," she says. "The public had a right to know what [the kidnapping] was about. If the public knew, [I believed] we would get more support. . . . It was risky. I could have been wrong. But I needed support. And I felt an informed public would be better than an uninformed public."

Mrs. Levin's decision to speak out a decision followed in turn by the families of many of the other Americans kidnapped after Levin — raised the question that continues to divide those working to obtain the release of the hostages: whether publicity and public diplomacy advance or harm the captives' interests. Many authorities on terrorism in and out of the Reagan administration maintain that publicity gives the captors the impression that their actions are having an effect, thus encouraging them to dig in and hold the captives until their demands are met. "We could have had a story every hour on the hour," says CNN executive vice-president Ed Turner. "But we were counseled not to raise Jerry's profile because . . . it would be a dangerous enhancement of his perceived value. . . . I can understand Mrs. Levin's position," he says, "I just disagreed. We elected to go with the advice of the, quote, experts." As a result, CNN never broadcast the videotape in which Levin relayed the terms for his release.

Since escaping his captors in February 1985, Levin has joined his wife as an outspoken critic of the quiet approach. The limited attention given the hostages in Lebanon, they assert, has allowed the Reagan administration to act with "considerably narrower resolve" than it has exhibited in other hostage crises. Fur-



Freed: Since escaping last year, CNN reporter Jeremy Levin, shown here with his wife, has sharply criticized the administration and the media.

thermore, Levin accuses the Reagan administration of managing the news and faults news organizations for allowing themselves to be manipulated. For months after the videotape of him had made known his captors' demands for the freeing of the seventeen in Kuwait, Levin points out, most news organizations continued to echo the administration's claim that the reason for the kidnappings was not known. "That was disinformation plain and simple," he says. "By not revealing the basic facts, the administration perpetuated a myth that our captivity was a mystery when it clearly was not."

And by not pursuing the story independently, reporters and editors unwittingly played along. For example, in a January 29, 1985, New York Times story reporting that a tape of hostage William Buckley had been received by the State Department, Bernard Gwertzman wrote that "the tape did not clear up the uncertainty over who is holding the Americans, where they are . . and what the conditions are for their release." Although Gwertzman reported that another tape calling for the release of the sev-

enteen in Kuwait had been received the previous July, he went on to write that "a senior State Department official said, however, that it was not definite the Beirut abductors were demanding the release of the prisoners in Kuwait as the condition for freeing the Americans."

At a closed meeting of the hostages' families, congressmen, and State Department representatives in July 1985, Levin asked Ambassador Robert Oakley, director of the State Department's Office for Counter-Terrorism, why the administration did not discuss the hostages and the demands of their captors more openly. According to Levin, Oakley responded that since reporters had never pressed for information, his office did not feel obliged to volunteer any. Thus, the press was blamed for not requesting information that the administration was in fact withholding.

Terrell Arnold, Oakley's former dep-

AP: caught in the middle

"AP is run by journalists," says one of its reporters. "They are good people but they are not activists. . . . They haven't taken initiative." Critics inside and outside the news cooperative say that with the resources of the world's largest newsgathering organization at their fingertips, AP president Louis Boccardi and executive editor Walter Mears could—and should—be doing more to obtain the release of AP correspondent Terry Anderson. "I think they have a lot of explaining to do," says a friend of Anderson. "They are low-profiling it to the point of absurdity."

Boccardi and Mears take Anderson's predicament very seriously. ("Write carefully," Boccardi counseled at the end of our interview. "A man's life is at stake.") They say that they have contacted a wide variety of government, diplomatic, private, and "shadowy kinds of figures" to seek advice and to plead for Anderson's release. "We are doing what we can," Boccardi says, "quietly rather than publicly."

When Anderson was kidnapped in March 1985, AP dispatched its Athensbased business manager for the eastern Mediterranean to plead its case in Damascus. But neither Boccardi nor Mears

nor foreign editor Nate Polowetsky has traveled to the Middle East on Anderson's behalf. "AP has basically surrendered its prerogatives to the State Department," says a former AP reporter. "They have put all their eggs in one basket."

By contrast, two days after Jeremy Levin, Cable News Network's bureau chief in Beirut, was kidnapped in 1984, CNN executive vice-president Ed Turner flew to Beirut. During the next seven weeks, Turner says, he met with the Syrian government and representatives of forty-seven different political groups. As it turned out, Turner's efforts did not obtain Levin's release. (Levin managed to escape his captors nearly a year later.) But Turner believes his presence in Beirut showed that CNN cared about its reporter and might have prevented Levin's captors from harming him.

Mears admits that AP's man in Athens "did not get to a level of [the Syrian] government that was suggested in Washington. But who controls the situation?" he asks. "What we hear is that the Syrians probably know a lot about it but don't control it. You can do a lot of things that are . . . showy but don't get you anywhere, and may very well retard

the process." If something would be accomplished by going to Damascus, adds Boccardi, they would go.

The two men say that the AP cannot afford to speak out about Reagan administration policy or urge negotiations because to do so might endanger Anderson and other agency employees. "There are sixteen hundred journalists who work for the AP and a lot of them work in very difficult places," says Mears. "There is a dimension here that gets out a little beyond Terry."

nlike Anderson's sister, Peggy Say, and many of the relatives of the other hostages, Boccardi and Mears worry that a public outcry for Anderson's release might prolong his captivity or even endanger his life - a position that the Reagan administration has taken in regard to all the hostages since the wave of kidnappings began in 1984. "There is a point where loud public effort doesn't help," Boccardi says. "So we have found ourselves trying to walk a path that is somewhere between silence - you know, the forgotten seven - and such a public display that it would [be] counterproductive." In every speech he has made in the last year, Boccardi says ("and I've made a lot of them"), he has mentioned Anderson.



Making news: The hijacking of TWA flight 847 stirred interest in the "forgotten hostages.' Here, reporters surround Peggy Say, sister of Terry Anderson, following a meeting with Vice-president Bush.

uty, says that whether to publish terrorist demands "is another issue about which reasonable people differ. It is general policy that the U.S. does not publicize terrorist demands. There was nothing nefarious about it. It was a judgment call."

As the months passed and more Americans and other foreigners in Beirut were taken captive, news organizations fell into a routine. Each new kidnapping was dutifully reported - sometimes on the front page — and the number of missing Americans tallied. Afterward, however, the hostages would usually reappear in the news only briefly when a letter, videotape, or threat had been received.

Then, in June 1985, TWA flight 847 was hijacked on its way from Athens to Rome. All but forty of the passengers were released, and the situation settled into a standoff. American reporters and camera crews who had fled Beirut only months earlier rushed back to cover the "crisis." For seventeen days, the plight of the passengers aboard the TWA plane dominated the news. Newspapers ran lengthy - sometimes minute-by-minute - accounts of the first days of the hijacking based on the reports of those released. And reporters were assigned to examine the nature of the Shiite Moslem fundamentalist groups whose members were holding the Americans.

For the families and friends of the men already held hostage in Lebanon, the TWA hijacking was a watershed. For

Mears says that just after Anderson was kidnapped he directed AP editors to run at least one story about him on every cycle of the wire. But he soon realized that in order to keep something about Anderson on the wire every day, "you have to abdicate news judgment. And that makes us captives of the situation." The best way to deal with Anderson's plight, he concluded, was simply to follow it as a news story.

But to the dismay of some, including Peggy Say (who has only kind words for the support the AP has given her and her family), the AP does not try to keep Anderson's plight in the public eye with any ritual, such as a regular tally of the number of days he has been held. At President Reagan's prime-time news conference at the close of the Tokyo economic summit last April, most of the questions concerned terrorism. Although the AP White House correspondent rose first that night, as she or he does at every other presidential news conference (UPI and AP alternate), he didn't ask about Anderson. Nor did any of the other reporters present. "If Terry is a priority, why didn't they ask about the five being held?" Say wonders.

As a cooperative, AP is owned by the 1,351 newspapers and 5,700 radio and television stations in the United States

that are members. Terry Anderson reported from Beirut for each of these news organizations and thousands more around the world that subscribe to the wire service. Yet for a year, little effort was made by the AP to enlist their aid in his behalf. Last March, with the blessing of Boccardi and Mears, three colleagues of Anderson's - Newsday reporter Josh Friedman. Newsday assistant foreign editor Steve Hindy, and AP photographer Donald Mell - sent a letter to a few dozen reporters who had worked with Anderson in Beirut. The basic message was that "the press, both individuals and companies, should be doing a lot more to get Anderson out."

"It's time for Terry's colleagues to play a more active role," says Hindy. "It's time to get the newspapers that Terry wrote for to take action and to make contact with Syria [and the other countries involved)."

Some reporters who were approached, while endorsing the appeal, argue that Friedman, Hindy, and Mell are doing a job that the AP itself should have taken on soon after Anderson was seized. And some at AP now see their employer in a new light. "If I had been taken," says one former foreign correspondent, "I would have thought, 'Oh, the AP will get me out.' Now I am not so sure."

Despite their intense frustration at the lack of progress in the last fifteen months, Boccardi and Mears insist that they will continue to err on the side of caution. "If Terry Anderson comes out alive, as we hope he will, a lot of that discussion is going to disappear," says Boccardi, referring to AP's critics. "If the situation ends tragically, this kind of Monday-morning 'Why wasn't this done? Why wasn't that done?' is going to go on forever. And there is just nothing we can do about it."





Sending a message: The hostages' rare appearances in the news often occur only after videotapes made by their captors — such as this one showing British journalist Alec Collett — are sent anonymously to news organizations.

weeks prior to the hijacking, Roy Murphy, president of the New York-based Foreign Press Association, had been trying - without much success - to draw attention to the case of Alec Collett, a sixty-four-year-old British freelance journalist who had been kidnapped on March 25, 1985, while on assignment in Lebanon for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. A news conference near the end of May announcing a joint appeal for Collett's release by over 4,000 New York writers had received scant attention. Four days after the TWA hijacking, however, a large crowd of reporters and camera crews turned up at a second conference at which Collett's American wife read a personal appeal to her husband's captors.

The sudden attention proved to be a dramatic illustration of the power of the news media to set the national political agenda. Soon after the hijacking, the State Department advised the families of those already captive in Lebanon that the two events were unrelated and that the administration would not be able to negotiate for the release of hostages other than those held aboard the hijacked plane. "Until then," says Peggy Say, "I had gone along with quiet diplomacy. I would get indignant at the other families when they suggested that the State Department wasn't doing much." But after receiving this latest word from State, Say recalls, she contacted the other hostages' families and, together, they decided to "make a stink." She flew to Washington to do an interview

on CNN and stayed for days, meeting with reporters and appearing on the three network morning news shows and other programs. In each appearance, she stressed that Terry Anderson and the six other Americans held in Lebanon should be included with the thirty-nine held aboard the TWA plane. Members of the other hostages' families spoke out as well and reporters quickly picked up on the story, referring to the seven as the "forgotten hostages." At the end of the second week of the hijacking, Secretary of State Shultz announced that the administration was asking for the release of "all forty-six Americans" held in Lebanon, not just the thirty-nine still aboard flight 847.

n the end, of course, none of the seven was aboard the Red Cross trucks that brought the thirty-nine TWA passengers from southern Beirut to Damascus. But the families had seen what the press could do. "I couldn't have asked for a better response," says Say of the newspaper and television reporters she met. "They turned it around for us and almost got them out. More pressure," she insists, "would have brought them home."

Although the story of the "forgotten hostages" became familiar to many more journalists after the TWA hijacking, the attention it has received has continued to ebb and flow. Even news organizations that have pointed up the double standard exhibited by the news media find it difficult to police them-

selves. The New York Times, for example, has published two strong editorials criticizing the "fickle media" for their spotty coverage of the hostages. But in a full-page roundup of the year's terrorist incidents ("A Year of Grisly Deeds") published last December, the American hostages weren't even mentioned, although, surprisingly, French and Soviet citizens who had been kidnapped in Lebanon were.

Despite such lapses, the hostages are getting more attention than they were before the TWA hijacking. "At least now we're given airtime and print space when there is a major incident," says Andrew Mihelich, whose uncle, Father Lawrence Martin Jenco, the head of Catholic Relief Services in Lebanon, was kidnapped in January 1985. "But we don't believe that should be the only reason why we're news." Mihelich and others are particularly embittered by the one-note quality of the reporting. "The only thing the national press asks is: Are you angry with our government?" he says. "We don't believe that we should have to be forced to initiate activities in order to put something on TV or radio."

In the end, what many of the families want is the same saturation coverage given the TWA hijacking and the embassy hostages in Iran - or at least substantial coverage of their hostage crisis. That way, they believe, the administration would be pressured to bring their loved ones home alive. Is this too much to ask? In France, after four television journalists were kidnapped in Lebanon last March, the state television network, inspired by the actions of the American television networks in 1980, began leading each of its four daily newscasts with a brief reprise of the names and photos of the nine Frenchmen still being held in Lebanon and continues the practice.

In the U.S. today, the cruel lesson is that, without the visible drama of the hostages being paraded before the cameras or of a crowd cursing the U.S., not only will America never be made to feel it is being "held hostage," but readers and viewers can expect to learn precious little about the nature of the kidnappers, their motivations, and, in the most surprising omission of all, what the current administration is doing to resolve a situation that has dragged on now for years.

Sunday magazines: Do they deserve to survive?

A reasonably opinionated survey of a hybrid product that doesn't look like a newspaper or read like a magazine

by MITCHELL J. SHIELDS

hen the editors of the Los Angeles Times announced in early 1985 that they would be replacing their ailing Sunday magazine Home with a new, completely rethought Los Angeles Times Magazine, they promised nothing less than a revolution in the Sunday magazine field. Ads appearing in trade magazines claimed that "starting October 6, 1985, Sundays in southern California will never be the same." Later ads, even less modest, guaranteed that the Times would "change forever the way you think about Sunday newspaper magazines."

The promotion was almost unprecedented in its intensity — and justifiably so, according to Jean Sharley Taylor, associate editor at the *Times* and the main editorial force behind the new publication. With close to two years of preparation, numerous abandoned prototypes, and a claimed refusal to be bound by traditional Sunday-magazine thinking, the people behind the *Los Angeles Times Magazine* asserted that they had taken a giant step toward reshaping the very idea of what Sunday magazines should — and *could* — be.

Such a bold declaration couldn't help but excite Sunday-magazine editors across the country. For most of the 1980s these editors had been looking for something — for anything — on which they could pin some hope for the future of their publications. The decade had not been a good one for Sunday magazines. Historically broken into three segments - the nationally syndicated supplements Parade and Family Weekly (see sidebar, page 36), the fifty to sixty locally edited members of the Sundaymagazine network, and the four locally edited independents, Home, The New York Times Magazine, The Newsday Magazine, and the San Francisco Chronicle and Examiner's California Living — Sunday magazines have rarely been viewed as an integral part of the papers they appeared in. Seen as a breed apart, not quite newspapers but not exactly real magazines either, they have floundered in search of an identity that would justify their place in the Sunday

This search for purpose has been more than academic. A decline in Sunday-magazine advertising — brought about largely by the burgeoning popularity of preprinted inserts and direct mailers — has forced many newspapers to question whether their slick supplements are worth keeping. A growing number are deciding that the answer is no. In Jan-

uary, the second-oldest Sunday magazine in America, The Atlanta Journal and Constitution's Atlanta Weekly, gave up the struggle and meekly allowed itself to become little more than a local fourcolor insert in Parade (see "The Silencing of a Southern Voice," CJR, November/December 1985). Then, in May, the New Orleans Times-Picayune shut down its magazine, Dixie, after close to forty years of publication. When The Times-Picayune announced Dixie's demise, it noted that from a high of thirtytwo pages of advertising in the mid-1950s the magazine had dropped to a point where some issues numbered no more than twelve pages of editorial and advertising. Last September, similarly shrinking magazines had led The Arizona Republic and The Indianapolis Star to dismiss their local products in favor of Parade. And even where a magazine has been allowed to survive, troubles can be seen. The Miami Herald's Tropic, once fatly successful, has shrunk to an emaciated imitation of itself. And The

Mitchell J. Shields, who has been a staff writer and senior editor at Atlanta Weekly and a senior editor at Madison Avenue, is presently associate editor at Southern Magazine, a regional magazine that will make its debut in September.



Dallas Times Herald's magazine seemed to change editors and focus on a yearly basis, finally even dumping its long-time name, Westward, in favor of something new — Dallas City.

No wonder, then, that the Los Angeles Times Magazine was eagerly anticipated not just by readers in Los Angeles but by Sunday-magazine editors nationwide. And no wonder, too, that the editors were so bitterly disappointed when the magazine finally appeared. Rather than blaze the promised new trails, the Times Magazine simply succumbed once again to the problems that have bedev-

iled Sunday magazines from the start.

The first letdown was the dismal look of the magazine. One of the allegedly ground-breaking steps the *Times* had taken was to reduce its magazine from the traditional ten-and-three-quarters by twelve-and-one-half-inch supplement size to the eight-and-one-quarter by ten-and-three-quarters-inch format preferred by newsstand magazines. The reduction in size was accompanied by an upgrading of paper stock, ostensibly to allow for the sort of bright graphics readers of, say, *Esquire* or *Time* had grown used to. Instead, what readers got were tiny

newspaper-style headlines and mediocre photographs slapped onto the page with minimal sense of magazine design.

The stories in that premiere issue were equally unsatisfying, despite the fact that they had been handed over to such triedand-true magazine hands as Jonathan Kirsch and Chris Hodenfield, or to such undeniably talented Times staffers as sportswriter Bob Oates and political correspondent Robert Scheer. Whether it was Scheer, known for his hard-nosed reporting, tossing lollipop questions to Harry Belafonte in a one-page schmooze about USA for Africa, or Oates surveying the Los Angeles sports franchises in a bit of chest-beating to prove "this the best sports town in a sports-minded country," the stories were uniformly pallid. It's not that they were bad so much as they simply weren't very good.

Even the *Times* realized this, as staff changes and format shifts since that first issue show. But despite being reworked, the *Los Angeles Times Magazine* has shown little real improvement. The design remains stodgy and the stories have continued to grapple with such challenging subjects as a guide to the good life in the resort area of Mammoth.

That such a magazine didn't have to be dull was proven by Image, a downsized, slick-paper magazine introduced by the San Francisco Examiner on the same day as the Times's much-heralded launch. Cheeky where the Times Magazine is stolid, experimental in its graphics, and willing on occasion to deal with disturbing stories, Image, with fewer resources, looks very much like the magazine the Times Magazine promised to be. Judging from its prototype and from what its new editor has to say, The Washington Post Magazine may soon offer more proof that small-format magazines can work. Scheduled to appear in reduced size on September 7, the new Washington Post Magazine will physically resemble the Los Angeles Times Magazine, but editorially, Post people promise, it will be quite different.

Still, as the most-promoted and mostanticipated change in Sunday magazines almost since they began, the *Times Mag*azine deserves attention. Its tale of woe is not an isolated one: what went wrong in Los Angeles has much to say about the problems of Sunday magazines in general.

Can USA Weekend catch up with Parade?

For many people the real news in the Sunday-magazine field during 1985 was not the introduction of the Los Angeles Times Magazine, but rather the surprise purchase of Family Weekly by Gannett and its subsequent transformation of its new property into USA Weekend, a supplement-sized simulacrum of the softer elements of USA Today.

Gannett's move upset the balance in the national supplement arena. For a number of years Family Weekly had not only been a poor second in terms of circulation to Parade, it had also been a rather obvious imitation of its more successful rival. Though Family Weekly was a bit more celebrity-oriented, both it and Parade were in essence weekly celebrators of the virtues of heart, home, motherhood, and apple pie.

USA Weekend offered a new vision of what a national Sunday supplement should be. It didn't have much to do with magazines, but it was distinctive. Awash with color and besofted with celebrities, USA Weekend is the quintessence of the quick read. Stories rarely run longer than two pages; even then they are broken up by bullets and pullout facts for the scanning reader.

Parade has obviously felt the breath of USA Weekend on its back. Initially, though, it looked as if the change would work in Parade's favor. When the recasting of Family Weekly as USA Weekend was announced, some 146 newspapers immediately dropped the new publication, viewing it as little more than an advertisement for USA Today.

Many of those papers were picked up by *Parade*, boosting its circulation to approximately 30 million. (*USA Weekend*'s circulation is presently close to 14 million.)

But despite its circulation lead, Parade has recently made a number of changes that can only be seen as having been inspired by USA Weekend. One change has been an increased use of color photos, color boxes, and color type - to such a degree that some pages of Parade could fit fairly easily into USA Weekend. Another nod to the competition has been the introduction of a celebrity column written by James Brady that ends every issue of Parade. Though USA Weekend still wins the celebrity count hands down, Parade does seem to have decided that its readers need more of a celebrity fix every week than has been provided in the past by "Personality Parade," a question-and-answer column about the well-known put together by Walter Scott.

Despite such bows to celebrity, however, the essence of *Parade* still lies in its celebration of the quotidian virtues. An article on a sixty-five-year-old man who began jogging when he was fifty-eight and now holds a U.S. record in his age group for the 100-mile run would have trouble making the pages of *USA Weekend*. However, it could — and did — make the cover of *Parade*. *USA Weekend*'s cover that Sunday featured country singer Dolly Parton, who was opening a theme park named after her in Tennessee. *M.J.S.*



at the Trib. The picture was taken on the day the Trib folded in 1967.

If there is a lesson to be learned from the Times Magazine story it is that problems inevitably arise when a publication is conceived primarily as an outlet for advertising. In early interviews given to explain the reason for the move to a down-sized format. Times editors and advertising executives claimed that both readers and advertisers viewed Sunday magazines as frivolous by their very nature. The only way to break free of that perception, their argument went, was to go to an entirely new look. However, it soon became obvious to many observers that, despite the Times's avowed desire to give its readers a more satisfying product, Home was not being replaced primarily for their benefit. Rather, it was being replaced to help attract a different class of advertiser. (In particular, the down-sizing made it easier for advertisers who had prepared ads for national magazines to use them in the Times. Similarly, the upgraded paper stock addressed advertising and production priorities rather than editorial concerns.) All during the early promotion, the exact editorial mix and purpose of the Times Magazine was left slightly mysterious. The advertising advantages, though, were very clearly defined.

There has been ample, sad precedent for the Times's myopia. For many years the major purpose of the magazine in the average newspaper's Sunday package has been to provide a home for glossy retail advertising. Sunday-magazine readers were thought to be mainly female, mainly housewives, and, as newspaper people's reasoning ran, mainly uninterested in anything other than bright profiles and looks at the annual flower show.

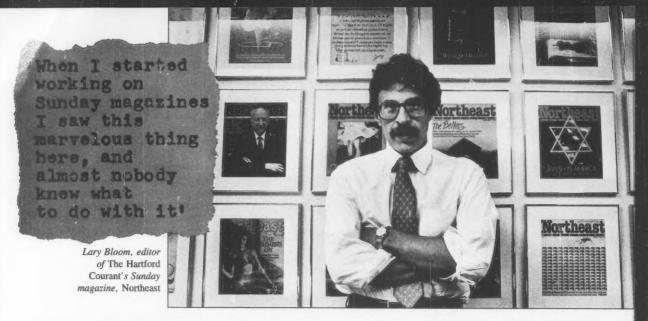
t the same time, Sunday magazines have rarely been strong players in the politics that define where power resides at newspapers. "There is an internal conflict," notes Clay Felker, who edited New York when it was still the Sunday magazine of the New York Herald Tribune. "The mainsheet editor's real concern is the main sheet. If he gets a good story, that's where he wants to put it. By definition the magazine was a second-class citizen. It got the second-class writers and the second-class stories."

In more than a few instances the Sunday magazine offices were physically separated from the rest of the paper, the staff working in isolated warrens far from the city room mainstream. The number of editors who have risen from the ranks of Sunday magazines to run newspapers can be counted on one hand, something that has helped guarantee the magazines' second-class status.

"Magazine editors tended to be appointed because they were on the downside of their careers," observes John Parkyn, who came to the United States in the mid-1960s from the London Daily Telegraph Sunday Magazine to run The Miami Herald's Tropic. (Parkyn presently edits the Fort Lauderdale News/ Sun-Sentinel's Sunshine.) "It was a place for them to retire. When you did get someone who was young and fired up about the possibilities of the magazine, he was always being trained for something else, and in fact wanted to move on to something else. The Sunday magazine was not the place to be."

It's not surprising, then, that, with a handful of notable exceptions, Sunday magazines have never been very good. While they have had the opportunity to provide, on a local level, all the things that distinguish good magazine journalism from good newspaper journalism point of view, opinion, style, assessment, interpretation, an attempt to get not only at what something is but what it means - they have rarely done so. Instead, they have generally been a repository of soft, fluffy, harmless features guaranteed to help readers drift off into a Sunday nap.

"There was what I call the tendency toward pictures of nuns playing tennis and giraffes in the London zoo," notes



Lary Bloom, who began editing Sunday magazines in 1971 at the Akron Beacon Journal's Beacon Magazine before moving on to Tropic and now The Hartford Courant's Northeast. "When I started working on Sunday magazines I saw this marvelous thing here, and almost nobody knew what to do with it."

erhaps the best-known attempt to break out of the Sunday supplement straitjacket is Clay Felker's work at the New York Herald Tribune's New York. With an intense focus on local stories, a willingness to take stances, and an apparent desire to create a definition of the city in which the newspaper was published, New York created what could have been a role model for Sunday magazines. Through the use of writers such as Tom Wolfe, Jimmy Breslin, Dick Schaap, Gail Sheehy, and Robert Christgau, Felker, who had learned his craft on such magazines as Esquire, managed to change the way Sunday magazines or at least his Sunday magazine - were viewed. As Wolfe recalled some years later in his introduction to The New Journalism, "At that time, 1963 and 1964, Sunday supplements were close to being the lowest form of periodical. Their status was well below that of the ordinary daily newspaper, and only slightly above that of the morbidity press, sheets like the National Enquirer in its 'I Left My Babies in the Deep Freeze' period. As a result, Sunday supplements had no traditions, no pretensions, no promises to live up to, not even any rules to speak of. They were brain candy, that was all."

That lack of tradition led most Sunday magazine editors to cling tightly to conservative notions of journalism. Felker, though, cast caution to the wind. Other Sunday magazines might have stories on a crafts festival at a local park; New York would have a two-part series by Wolfe poking cruel fun at a local institution such as The New Yorker in "Tiny Mummies! The True Story of the Ruler of 43rd Street's Land of the Walking Dead!"

It was not simply that New York had a local focus or that it created a distinct identity for itself. What New York and Felker helped pioneer was thinking of Sunday supplements as magazines, with all the potentials magazines enjoy. Unfortunately, the lessons New York had to teach were for the most part ignored by newspaper people. Instead, New York spawned a new class of magazines, the city magazine, that at least in the beginning did what Sunday magazines should have been doing but weren't.

There have been sporadic attempts at definition since Felker's, but the one with the most influence began in the late 1970s. It was then that an influx of younger, sometimes magazine-trained editors led to a rash of experimentation. From about 1978 on, anyone leafing through the stacks of Sunday magazines shipped weekly to its clients by the Standard Gravure Corporation, the printer of

the majority of the country's Sunday magazines, could not help but notice the change. The traditional flower-show cover became increasingly difficult to find; harder, reportorial stories cropped up more frequently; and magazines were redesigned at a rapid clip. In February 1981, Lary Bloom convened a meeting of editors from many of the nation's leading Sunday magazines; out of that conference came an editorial advisory board committed to keeping new ideas circulating and providing a vehicle for joint editorial action by the otherwise independent Sunday magazines.

"It was an incredible period of excitement," recalls Lee Walburn, who was editor of Atlanta Weekly at the time. "There was a general feeling of 'Let's see just what Sunday magazines can be," and it was all over the country."

Did any real improvements come out of all this reflection? The answer to that is decidedly mixed. In terms of design the progress has been dramatic. Art directors almost across the board are showing a surer touch in their use of type, art, and photos and less reliance on newspaper approaches. The Plain Dealer Magazine in Cleveland is one that has shown a consistently fine graphic sense, as has The Boston Globe Magazine. Editorially, the story is less positive. Though the quality of the average Sunday-magazine story has improved over the last decade, it hasn't improved much. As with the Los Angeles Times Magazine, the disappointment isn't so much that the stories are bad; it's that, after all this time, they aren't any better.

As anyone who reads Sunday magazines regularly soon discovers, many of the stories laid out for his or her entertainment fall into a few predictable categories. In a survey of magazines selected randomly from late last summer and early fall (when issues tend to be larger, and so more representative), I found such standard fare as:

• The "What Do You Mean This Isn't The Living Section?" story. These are pieces that would fit as well, or better, in a paper's life-style pages. Typical was "Night Shift" in the Baltimore Sun's Sun Magazine. A series of quick looks at what people do after midnight in Baltimore, the story included a talk with people at a late-night cafe, a disc jockey with a 12 to 6 A.M. shift, an emergency veterinarian, and a clerk in a pornographic book store. The piece worked fine as far as it went, but it went only as far as newspaper stories go. It showed the terrain, but that was it.

"Getting Rich at the State Fair" in the Minneapolis Star and Tribune's Sunday Magazine, a profile of food vendors at the Minneapolis State Fair, was similarly superficial. Tasty at times, perhaps, but definitely not filling.

• The "I'd Rather Be Writing For Entertainment Tonight" story. This is yet another step in the apotheosis of the celebrity. A sample of that genre was "Oh Bruce! How Could You!" in the Gannett Westchester Rockland Newspapers' Suburbia Today. A look at celebrity worship and how fans identify with their heroes, the piece works mainly as a means of getting star names into print.

"Getting Strong for Toledo" in Toledo Magazine, a profile of Toledo bodybuilders paired with a science writer's examination of how healthy body-building actually is, also treads the Entertainment Tonight turf. Though less a look at existing celebrities than a look at how people try to be celebrities, it shares with the Bruce Springsteen piece a television quality, a look at surface values for surface reasons.

Then there was "Animal Actors" in the Los Angeles Herald Examiner's California Living. A wire-service-style look at animals that have acted in movies, this might actually be a bit too silly for TV. • The "What a Great Excuse for Pretty Pictures" story. This is a category that refuses to die. Sunday magazines have historically been little more than a place to display photography, and at many papers that remains their purpose. A story with potential like "A Neglected Treasure" in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch's PD, ostensibly a serious look at the history and meaning of school architecture in St. Louis, becomes in practice cut lines under attractive school facades. "Road to Relaxation" in The Milwaukee Journal's Wisconsin, a travel guide to sights along Wisconsin's Highway 64, is another in a never-ending series of snapshots from the blacktop.

There's nothing inherently wrong with any of this, of course. One of the purposes of newspapers is to entertain, and an occasional light touch can be pleasant. But when the occasional becomes the constant, some questions need to be asked, chief among them this: Why are so many Sunday magazines still so relentlessly superficial?

An apparent reason is money. "At most papers the Sunday magazine is the only [major editorial] section of the paper that has its own profit-and-loss statement, and the only one that's expected to be a profit center," says John Twohey, design director for the Chicago Tribune and former editor of Sunday, the Tribune's Sunday magazine. "And that's not fair. Too many publishers look at the Sunday magazine, decide they're not getting a good profit return, and cut back the editorial budget."

hat newspapers are economic as well as editorial creatures is, of course, hardly news. But whereas most newspaper sections are seen to have an editorial function at least as important as their economic one, in the eyes of too many publishers Sunday magazines have never been seen as anything but economic creatures. With very few exceptions, changes in Sunday magazines have been instituted solely for advertising reasons. The Part 2s that have become a regular addendum to The New York Times Magazine are simply one of the most successful cases in point. Prior to 1982 the Times had only seven Part 2 sections annually, and they covered expected territory for a Sunday magazine - men's fashions, home furnishings, and home entertainment. Ad-fat issues devoted to a single topic, the Part 2s made no pretense to be anything other than what they were: compatible editorial for particular types of advertisers. And even though the Part 2s have expanded into areas such as travel, sports, Manhattan puffery (The World of New York), and business, their reason for being remains the same: providing words to cushion pages of ads.

Still, income-hungry publishers can't be faulted entirely for the problems of Sunday magazines. Part of the difficulty still lies with the magazine editors themselves. Despite all the discussions, debates, and consciousness-raising of the last decade, most Sunday-magazine editors still show a disturbing inability to distinguish a magazine story from a newspaper story. Though there are exceptions - Lary Bloom at Northeast, Gene Weingarten at Tropic, Lisa Velders at the Detroit News's Michigan they are simply the sort of exceptions that prove the rule. "The point of a magazine is really interpretive journalism,' notes Clay Felker. "You can't just tell what happened in a story; you have to try and tell why, and sometimes that means moving beyond what you can touch or prove one-hundred percent. And that is something very hard for daily-newspaper-trained journalists to understand."

The "What Do You Mean This Isn't The Living Section?" syndrome is just the most obvious example of newspaper features masquerading as magazine stories — to the detriment of the magazines they appear in. It is painful to watch a Sunday magazine trying to break the bonds of the newspaper format only to stretch it into odd shapes. The Chicago Tribune's Sunday is one that often attempts — but fails — to break those bonds. Though its stories tend to be well researched, and extremely long, they rarely try to make sense of their subjects. Though occasionally good pieces of reporting, they are only seldom magazine articles.

Another pervasive problem, and one that seems to afflict the magazines of the newspapers with the most money and pretensions, might be called the *New York Times* syndrome. *The New York Times Magazine* has long been an object of envy among most Sunday-magazine

editors. Fat, slick, and respectable, it has the prestige many Sunday magazines would kill for. Despite its lapses, occasional stuffiness, and an eclecticism that might cause some less-than-charitable souls to wonder if its editors have any sense of a distinct personality for the magazine, The New York Times Magazine has clout and, with regularity, standout stories.

As a model for other Sunday magazines, the Times Magazine is seductive - and destructive. Too many editors have made the mistake of deciding that they can capture the prestige after which they lust by aping the Times Magazine's predilection for national and international stories, a predilection it alone can get away with, thanks to the Times's unique status as a national newspaper. The real strength of most Sunday magazines, their real reason to be, is their ability to cover their own backyards with a depth of understanding often missing in - and, in fact, inappropriate for daily newspaper stories.

Too often it is the magazine that is superior in other ways that fails to recognize the strength of its local franchise. The Newsday Magazine, The Boston Globe Magazine, and The Philadelphia Inquirer's Inquirer are three otherwise commendable Sunday magazines that frequently fall into this trap. Despite having the space and resources to probe into Long Island characters and stories. The Newsday Magazine seems content instead to focus on such things as profiles of NFL commissioner Pete Rozelle and consumer advocate Ralph Nader or to delve into such questions as whether Miami Vice properly represents Miami's police department and why Americans are so obsessed with dieting. The Globe Magazine, though showing a greater interest in things Bostonian in the last year, still runs too many national and international stories, such as the examination of antinuclear protests in England that jumped through ten pages of an issue last September. A worthwhile story? Perhaps, but there are plenty of nonnewspaper magazines that look at the national and international picture. Only a handful dig into local material. City magazines, once a regular source of such stories, have in recent years tended to a 10 Best/ 10 Worst format. They do provide some local reporting, but they have also left a big gap that Sunday magazines could move to fill.

ith all these failings, are local Sunday magazines worth keeping alive? The consensus is hardly universal that they are. Nancy Smith, the former managing editor of Texas Monthly who was called to Atlanta in 1979 to transform The Atlanta Journal & Constitution Magazine into what became the award-winning Atlanta Weekly, is unconvinced that local magazines are necessary. "Although I personally like them, what does that mean? It means that people involved with Sunday magazines like Sunday magazines," she says. "But does the public? Maybe not. People are looking for celebrity profiles, crosswords, things that are fun, and maybe that's better provided by a Parade or a USA Weekend. The thing I found most interesting about my time with Atlanta Weekly was that newspapers do what they do and magazines do what they do. And I'm not sure that the twain can meet."

Eugene Patterson, chief executive officer of the St. Petersburg Times and Evening Independent, agrees. In 1983 the St. Petersburg Times killed its sixteen-year-old magazine, The Floridian, in an effort, Patterson says, to make better use of the paper's resources. "You have to decide, can the money and people spent on a magazine be used better elsewhere? In a lot of cases I think that answer is yes," he says. "In most cases Sunday magazines just add froth. Every good newspaper has its froth, but when we read Sunday magazines as newspaper editors we realize that the republic wouldn't founder if they suddenly disappeared." Maybe not. Still, there is an element of truth that eludes most newspaper reporting, a depth and complexity that are more easily approached through magazine journalism than the daily variety. And in many communities the local Sunday magazine remains the only outlet for that sort of journalism.

When one sees what Sunday magazines can do their worth becomes apparent. Though my survey of Sunday magazines uncovered a horde of easily dismissed articles, it also uncovered the harrowing story of a man accused by his ex-wife, apparently falsely, of sexually abusing his son, and the bureaucratic

nightmare he faced in regaining custody of his child ("A Question of Innocence" in The Miami Herald's Tropic); an illuminating look at why police in Torrington, Connecticut, refused to protect a woman from being battered by her estranged husband, and how her lawsuit against the police could change the way battered wives nationwide are treated ("The Battering of Tracey Thurman" in The Hartford Courant's Northeast); and, most notably, a moving tale of how Salvadoran refugees in San Francisco suffer a battlefield syndrome commonly associated with veterans of Vietnam ("Shadowed Lives." in the San Francisco Examiner's Image). Opening on a dream, and closing on a Central American Christmas tradition of reenacting Joseph and Mary's search for shelter in Bethlehem, the Image story packs a clout greater than the sum of its basic facts, a clout largely attributable to its use of black-and-white photographs from El Salvador reproduced with blurred edges, as if seen in a dream, alternating with slightly off-focus, eerie photos of Salvadorans in San Francisco. Similarly, when the TV movie Under Siege stirred controversy in Detroit as the result of its depiction of Arab terrorists living in a Detroit suburb, The Detroit News's Michigan devoted an entire issue to the problems of the city's Arab community, the largest in the U.S.

imple examples, perhaps, but useful ones. Any of those stories, in their raw form, could have appeared in other sections of a newspaper. None, however, could have appeared as effectively outside of a magazine context. By moving a bit beyond what a daily paper is allowed to do, these stories gave readers a deeper understanding of their communities.

What these stories show is that making a Sunday magazine work doesn't necessarily require a lot of money. What is required is a little thought. If such pieces are to become the norm rather than the rarities they now are, newspaper publishers and main-sheet editors will have to realize that Sunday magazines are not a vestigial appendage but are instead a critical part of the paper as a whole. Only then can Sunday magazines begin to play the role they should have been playing all along.

The Navajos, the Hopis, and the U.S. press

A massive relocation is under way. Can the press grasp this tale of two tribes?

by JERRY KAMMER

bout 100 miles to the east of the Grand Canyon, ir the high desert rangeland of northeastern Arizona, the federal government is carrying out the largest program of forced relocation since the internment of the Japanese-Americans in World War II. Thousands of Navajos are being forced to leave nearly a million acres awarded to the neighboring Hopi tribe in a congressionally mandated settlement of a century-old land dispute.

"Much of the blame for the dispute lies with the federal government," wrote Arizona Republic state editor Ted Williamson in an April 27 piece for the paper's Sunday Perspective section. "For more than a century, it has alternated between indifference and heavy-handedness in dealing with a complex and delicate situation."



Navajo chairman Peterson Zah points to the area which the Navajos must leave, in accordance with a federally mandated relocation scheme. Below, his audience listens as he explains a land-exchange program that would minimize forced relocation.





Danny Blackgoat, a Navajo, surveys the remains of his family's hogan, bulldozed after the family was relocated.

The same charge can be brought against the national press. "Every so often they come up with an exotic story with nice pictures," says Sandra Masetto, a member of the federal commission established to carry out the relocation. "I would think they would look at it from a substantive standpoint rather than a glamour standpoint. I mean, this is the biggest Indian issue in the last fifty years."

At widely scattered intervals since 1979, when a federal court drew the partition line Congress demanded, *The Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *The New York Times* have splashed their front pages with extensive pieces on the Navajo-Hopi turmoil, summarizing the dispute's history and noting its simmering passions. In May 1985,

Jerry Kammer is the author of The Second Long Walk: The Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute. Last year he assisted the Navajo tribe in preparing a press packet on the history of this dispute. He has been an occasional contributor to The Navajo Times. for example, Iver Peterson, *The New York Times*'s Denver bureau chief, traveled to Big Mountain, where he met Katherine Smith, one of the Navajo matriarchs leading the resistance. Smith told him, "If they come to push me out, I will just say, O.K., it is better if you just kill me now, and leave me here."

But while the dramatic stories from Arizona have implicitly recognized the dispute as a fascinating and still-evolving issue of national significance, national editors have refused to take it seriously. They have slighted or ignored completely recent initiatives to avert confrontation. Of the big three, only The New York Times paid attention last year when President Reagan took the extraordinary step of sending William Clark as his personal emissary to the two tribes. The Times account noted that the talks failed but it neglected to report on their substance: that Clark and his deputy, Richard Morris, called for land exchanges that would minimize forced relocation. Morris says that he was surprised at the press's indifference to the story, adding, "It could have helped bring about a better resolution if they had covered it."

In May of this year, when Congressman Morris Udall called representatives of both tribes to Washington for a hearing on his bill to enact land exchanges, the three big papers took a walk on the story. Shortly thereafter, a reporter at one of the big three acknowledged that his paper had slighted the issue. There was a sense, he said, that, having published a number of pieces on an Indian tribe two years before, "we had 'done Indians' for a while. It was as if to say, 'What more is there to say about Indians?' "

Generally speaking, the big three have hurried past the Navajos and the Hopis the way some tourists hurry across the reservations en route to the Grand Canyon. They have regarded the dispute and its people as little more than material for colorful features.

At least these stories have conveyed

some sense of the drama of the dispute. The real failure of the big three has been their reluctance to follow up the field reports with coverage of less colorful but equally significant developments in Flagstaff, home of the relocation commission, and Washington. Four years ago, relocation commissioners Sandra Massetto and Roger Lewis called for land exchanges between the two tribes as a means of reducing the number of those who live on the "wrong side" of the partition line. Then Lewis resigned after saying - in an astonishing moment of candor — that in relocating elderly Navajos he sometimes felt "as bad as the people who ran the concentration camps in World War Two." At the request of Senator Barry Goldwater, the Reagan administration replaced Lewis with a man whose only qualification for the job was that he had run "Democrats for Goldwater" in the 1980 election. The big three ignored it all.

The few reporters who have lingered over the story have found it as intriguing as the desert itself. "It's so complex, so persistent in making you uncover layer after layer, that it's probably the most fascinating story I've ever worked on," said Bill Walker of *The Denver Post*, who was writing a series on the issue that was scheduled to be published in late June.

Those who would understand the story must probe its mysteries. Do the Hopis need their half of the partitioned lands for their economic and cultural survival, as the sponsors of the 1974 law insisted, or will the land be of benefit primarily to a handful of affluent Hopi ranchers, as the Navajos claim? Did the Navajos settle the land after driving the Hopis to mesa-top villages, or did the much smaller Hopi tribe use the land only for hunting, gathering, and visiting religious shrines? Is the battle for the land fundamentally a struggle between two competing tribal groups, or merely a divide-and-conquer stratagem devised by the federal government and energy companies to get the Navajos off the land so strip-mining can begin? And, finally, does relocation ensure justice for the long-suffering Hopis, or does it represent a racist double standard on the part of a government that normally settles Indian land disputes by compensating the

Indians financially and allowing the settlers — who are usually whites — to remain?

The story is a logistical nightmare for reporters. Big Mountain, for example, is thirty miles from pavement and accessible only by roads like the ones that used to be featured in ads for radial tires. Many of the elderly speak no English, and the nearest phone is at Elijah Blair's trading post twenty miles away — two facts that make follow-up questions by phone an occasion for reporters' wisecracks.

The two papers closest to the two tribes — The Navajo Times and the Gallup, New Mexico, Independent — have provided generally excellent coverage of the dispute. And the Albuquerque Journal has also covered it consistently. The most significant regional development, however, has been The Arizona Republic's recognition of the inadequacy of coverage that for more than a decade had concentrated on spot reports of congressional hearings, meetings of the relocation commission, and press conferences organized by public relations experts employed by both tribes.

"We had given it a snapshot look, instead of helping people understand why it was important," says city editor Richard Robertson, who coordinates news coverage. "There we were, spending a lot of time with wire coverage of the West Bank, but missing a similar issue right here in our own backyard."

The Republic hired Paul Brinkley-

Rogers to man its northern Arizona bureau, in part because of his interest in the Navajos and Hopis. Brinkley-Rogers, who covered the Vietnam War as a correspondent for *Newsweek*, calls the Navajo-Hopi story "overwhelming, almost to the same extent that living in Saigon was. In terms of its color, emotions, complexity, and consequences, I think it's without equal among national issues." His stories have provided *Republic* readers their first chance to enter the land and see the effects of government policy on its people.

n putting Brinkley-Rogers on the story, the Republic sought to position itself for a widely anticipated confrontation on July 6 of this year, which Congress had originally established as the deadline for relocation. (Nearly a thousand families - all but thirteen of them Navajo - have already been relocated. Another 1,500 Navajo families are scheduled to be relocated.) The defiance of Navajo grandmothers had been joined by rumblings from Navajo veterans of the Vietnam War and pledges of solidarity from non-Navajo members of the militant American Indian Movement. Many observers expected July 6 to be an Indian D-day, and the regional and national press took note with big stories that focused on Navajo anguish under powerful headlines: U.S. DRIVING OFF 10,000 INDIANS in The Sacramento Bee: MOVING MEANS TRAIL OF TEARS FOR NAVAJO in the Los Angeles

Navajo women — such as these who have come from Big Mountain to the Navajo capital of Window Rock — are among the most ardent opponents of relocation.





Hopi chairman Ivan Sidney is thanked by a Big Mountain woman for receiving, and speaking with, a Navajo delegation. (The traditional reluctance of the Hopis to be photographed accounts for the scarcity of photos of them here.)

Times; WAR OF TWO WORLDS: NAVAJO ELDER IS EYE OF STORM in The Arizona Republic; "Two Tribes, One Land" in Newsweek.

Congress and the Bureau of Indian Affairs have since taken action that will extend the relocation deadline by about seventeen months. But in the meantime

the stories had created a public relations problem for Hopi tribal council chairman Ivan Sidney, who called press conferences in Albuquerque and Phoenix to remind reporters that relocation, unpleasant though it was, represented the culmination of a string of Hopi victories in the courts and Congress. Wherever he went, Sidney carried a series of posterboard maps that drove home another key point: the Navajo Reservation has been gradually expanded to surround the Hopis. Sidney then began publishing a tabloid newspaper devoted to telling the Hopi side of the dispute and fighting "Navajo misinformation."

While both tribes have launched public relations efforts to bring national attention to the issue, the most provocative publicity has been generated by a group that calls itself the Big Mountain Legal Defense/Offense Committee. Comprising mostly youthful volunteers whose garb and idealism recall protesters against the Vietnam War, the committee

has raised enough money to send Navajo elders and Hopi "traditionalists" (those who do not regard the tribal council as legitimate and who oppose the relocation program) on cross-country speaking engagements. The committee explains the government's relocation policy as the result of a conspiracy on the part of greedy coal interests, despite the lack of solid evidence to support the charge, and labels Sidney and his supporters "puppets" of the federal government. Sidney has responded furiously, denouncing the committee for disseminating "halftruths, innuendo, and outright falsehoods."

The countercultural ideals and rhetoric of committee members have inspired cynical reporters to call them members of the "Wanna-be Indian" tribe. No one can deny their effectiveness and commitment, however. They have generated a flood of letters to Capitol Hill. What is more, they have organized dozens of chapters across the United States, including one in Berkeley, California, that publishes Big Mountain News, a tabloid that calls the fight against relocation "a facet of the greater international struggles . . . for indigenous self-determination, to end growing militarism and nuclear madness, and the day-to-day struggle in each of our lives for justice and equality." They have also gained a ready hearing abroad (see sidebar).

There is clearly a possibility of violent resistance to relocation. Given the size of the area awarded to the Hopis and the numbers of defiant Navajos and their supporters, the violence could easily be more widespread and intense than the confrontation at Wounded Knee in 1973. Already, American Indian Movement members have camped at Big Mountain under the banner "WK 1973," a reminder of their capacity for defiance of federal authorities. If there is a confrontation when a deadline is finally imposed, and if federal marshalls sent to evict Navajos do battle with an unlikely guerrilla force of AIM members, Navajo veterans of Vietnam, and grandmothers in calico skirts, the press will descend like Tom Wolfe's fruit flies, just as they did at Wounded Knee. They would feast on the violence of a tragedy that was spawned by competing tribes, compounded by the federal government, and neglected by the national press.

Europe: a skewed view

The Big Mountain Legal Defense/Offense Committee, whose support groups throughout the U.S. seek to halt the relocation of the Navajos, has gained a sympathetic hearing among journalists in Europe, where, as historian Ray Allen Billington has observed, popular images of Indian life have long "pictured the United States as a merciless enemy of a helpless minority, fracturing the Indians' social structure and relentlessly eroding their numbers by warfare, vice, and starvation, with the avowed purpose of eliminating the entire race."

Such a picture is, of course, nonsense. Over the past twenty years the federal government has done much to shield Indians from the economic pressures that in other countries are forcing native peoples off the land and into the turbulent misery of cities. Washington has, in fact, subsidized Indian cultures with a wide range of programs to provide free food, housing, education, and medical care. But there appears to be no knowledge of these policies among Europeans, who see relocation not as the aberration it is, but as the sinister continuation of a genocidal federal Indian policy.

An article in the West German Frankfurter Rundschau this past March quoted an unnamed Indian spokesman as calling Navajo relocation America's "final solution" to its Indian problem. A recent article in the Austrian Alpenpost printed the claim of a local support group that "over 10,000 Navajos are standing on the brink of a massacre." The most outlandish commentary on relocation is a fabricated statement attributed to President Reagan that has appeared over the past year in at least three Dutch newspapers, including the respected Volkskrant. "This is not going to be another Wounded Knee," the president is quoted as saying about the once-anticipated July 6 eviction of Navajos by the National Guard. "The whole operation will be over in thirty minutes."

It can't be long before the relocation story is picked up by the press in the Soviet Union, where government officials have countered U.S. claims of Soviet human rights violations with taunting reminders of our treatment of Indians historically and of the recent controversial murder conviction of Sioux militant Leonard Peltier. J.K.

The annual CBS free-for-all

A visit to a no-holds-barred stockholders' meeting

by MICHAEL MASSING

he start of the CBS annual share-holders' meeting is minutes away, and Reed Irvine is busy working the crowd. Moving from row to row, the chairman of Accuracy in Media smiles broadly as he hands out copies of the latest *AIM Report*. Headlined "Rather Atrocious," it accuses the CBS anchorman of doing a soft sell on the Sandinistas. His performance, AIM declares, is yet another reason "why so many people in this country feel that CBS often goes out of its way to try to undermine confidence in the United States."

Once given over to earnings reports and dividend schedules, these affairs now pull in disgruntled viewers from across the land. For the price of a share of stock, an individual gains the right, in effect, to talk back to the tube. This spring, CBS was selling for around \$138 a share — a small sum to pay for the chance to demand that a news bureau be set up in Paraguay, say, or that Warner Wolf be made the morning anchor.

The April 16 meeting is being held in a converted studio at WCAU, CBS's owned-and-operated station in Philadelphia. On entering, we are handed a list of ground rules. "Annual meetings are for the benefit of all shareholders in attendance and not merely for the most vocal," it notes. Shortly after two o'clock, CBS chairman Tom Wyman calls the meeting to order. He embarks on a wrap-up of the past year's events. His history is somewhat selective. In the last year, the network has withstood a traumatic political assault and a major takeover bid, but Wyman contentedly chatters on about the sale of a toy outfit and the purchase of a magazine company. We are urged to pick up some of the company's publications, such as Cycle, Home Decorating Ideas, and TV Word Games.

It's now time to elect a board of directors. Wyman introduces the current

directors - Walter Cronkite, Harold Brown, and Newton Minow among them - who are promptly put up for reelection. Wyman then asks for other nominations. Up to now everything has been calm; suddenly, all hell breaks loose. On his feet in the second row is Reed Irvine, who, on being recognized, fires off a broadside against the board. He asserts that four of the fourteen current directors have served in Democratic administrations, and none in Republican ones; that directors have served in such liberal outfits as the Brookings Institution and the Ford Foundation but none in the Hoover Institution or the Heritage

THE ELECTRONIC BEAT

Foundation. The board, Irvine says, "includes one woman, one black, and one octogenarian. It includes no one who, by either publicized affiliations or general reputation, can be identified as a conservative." Singled out for censure is Walter Cronkite, who, Irvine claims, "has long favored unilateral nuclear disarmament for the United States." Cronkite has been an annual target, regularly flogged for his role in spreading communist disinformation. The people around me stare absently down at their shoelaces.

They stir when Wyman calls upon James Cain, spokesman for Fairness In Media. It is the first time anyone from Jesse Helms's group has spoken at a CBS meeting (see "Helms and Co.: Plotting to Unseat Dan Rather," CJR, July/August, 1985), and the 200 or so people in attendance sense a confrontation. Cain, a young, clean-cut man, seems somewhat unsure of himself as he goes on about the Soviet threat and leftist insurgencies. The crowd starts inspecting its shoelaces again.

Soon Irvine is up once more. The chair is now entertaining stockholder resolutions and Irvine proposes — as he has at many meetings past — that CBS

hire an ombudsman. Irvine attacks the network for treating his letters with insufficient respect. He regales us with detailed highlights from the past year's AIM-CBS correspondence. "Mister Chairman," Irvine says, "there is a need for a viewers' advocate who will take serious complaints seriously."

Wyman points out that CBS already employs at least two people working full time to respond to AIM's letters, and it is not about to hire a third. Irvine argues - but only briefly. He has another resolution to offer. There are groans and a cry of "Down in front!" Ignoring them, Irvine demands that the network institute a program to test employees for drug use. He describes a nation of reporters strung out on cocaine. ABC, he declares, "had one of their employees drop dead on the premises from an overdose. I really would think it would be incumbent upon you to take stronger action to find out just how serious the problem is." At the end of Irvine's ten-minute monologue, Wyman says dryly, "Thank you very much for your counsel."

Happily, it's time for a musical interlude. Until now, one side of the studio has remained draped in curtains. They are now drawn to reveal none other than Wynton Marsalis, the feted black trumpet player and Columbia Records star.

The board, Irvine says, 'includes no one who, by either publicized affiliations or general reputation, can be identified as a conservative'

Reed Irvine, chairman, Accuracy in Media



Michael Massing is a contributing editor of the Review.



Wide World

Marsalis and his jazz quartet break into a brisk, funky number called "Knozzmoe King." The music marks an abrupt change in the tone, and political tenor, of the proceedings. Throughout the first hour, the right has dominated. Now, as the question-and-answer period gets under way, Wyman takes control. Even before he can finish summarizing the ground rules, Irvine is on his feet, his hand insistently raised. Wyman ignores him. "I have a question!" Irvine shouts. "Are you going to take us in order or are you going to ignore me?"

"Of all the things I may be accused of," Wyman shoots back, "ignoring you in this meeting will not be on the list."

yman soon calls on the day's star attraction, Reverend Jesse Jackson. Jackson has come to declare his support for a black boycott of CBS-owned stations across the country. The boycott, which began at WBBM in Chicago last October after the station demoted a black anchorman, has hurt that station's ratings. Clearly worried, CBS in March named Johnathan Rodgers — executive producer of The CBS Morning News and the network's highest-ranking black - to become WBBM's general manager. But the boycott continues as blacks attempt to force CBS to hire more minorities.

Jackson peers up at Wyman and the other six executives on the podium. All are white men. For the occasion, Jackson has traded his "Run, Jesse, Run" style for a more sober boardroom approach. "Today, there are zero black or Hispanic station managers in CBS," he says. "Zero black or Hispanic news directors. Zero black or Hispanic program directors. Zero black or Hispanic exec-

'Today, there are zero black or Hispanic station managers in CBS. Zero black or Hispanic news directors. Zero black or Hispanic program directors'

Rev. Jesse Jackson

utive producers. . . . '' Jackson has been well briefed, and the facts come rolling out without letup: "Three wars [are] being waged on the continent right now: Libya, Angola, and South Africa. More than one-eighth of the human race is African, more than thirty million Americans are of African heritage. Yet CBS has no bureaus between the Sahara and the Cape of Good Hope."

Although Jackson goes on at length, Wyman makes no attempt to interrupt him, and when he finishes, the CBS chairman deferentially promises to "respond in some detail, and thoughtfully," to "the specific questions you raise." Wyman leaves it up to Gene Jankowski, head of the Broadcast Group, to offer a gentle rebuttal. Disclaiming any "disrespect" for Jackson, Jankowski lists several black executives at the network. But the roster turns out to be rather meager, including such titles as vice-president of sales for the television stations division. Jackson, really indignant now, gradually reverts to the more pointed style of his campaign days. "Do you suggest that the numbers I just gave are substantially inaccurate . . .?" he inquires. "A city like Philadelphia with a substantial minority population, a black mayor, to have two white males on air at five, six, eleven . . . is unrepresentative, and it's an insult. Chicago, to have a Walter Jacobson [as anchor with] zero blacks on his staff. . . . Are these facts deniable?"

The seven men on the podium squirm. As the brass gropes for a response, relief comes from an unlikely source — Lester Kinsolving. A radio talk-show host and Reed Irvine sidekick, Kinsolving is best known for his bright red blazers (he's wearing one now) and the bizarre questions he poses at press briefings (he once

provoked Hodding Carter into throwing a rubber chicken at him). Kinsolving now advances his own set of figures, which purport to show that blacks and Hispanics actually make up 31 percent of WBBM's staff (CBS cites an over-all figure of 23 percent). Claiming that minorities constitute only 19 percent of the Chicago area (26 percent, according to government figures), he asks, "Has WBBM considered replacing twelve percent of those . . . Hispanics and blacks with other minorities such as Poles, Italians, Hungarians, and Manx?" (The Manx are residents of the Isle of Man.)

WYMAN: Would you like the short answer?

KINSOLVING: Yes.

WYMAN: No.

The meeting begins to wind down. A man with an East European-sounding name asks whether CBS has procedures for keeping Soviet journalist Vladimir Posner's propaganda off the air. An elderly man from Palm Beach, Florida, suggests that CBS set up a toll-free number and appoint conservatives like himself to call in periodically with advice. A soft-spoken gentleman shocks everyone by actually asking a question about company business. And Reed Irvine gets in one last slam — this time at Dan Rather's "disgraceful" coverage of Nicaragua.

Leaving the meeting, I sense that something has changed in the public challenge to CBS. The threat from the right, so strong a year ago, seems to have receded. Fairness In Media, aggressively beaten back by CBS, issued little more than a whimper at the meeting, and, if Wyman's treatment of Reed Irvine is any indication, the network regards Accuracy in Media as little more than an annual nuisance.

Jesse Jackson, by contrast, was received much like a visiting dignitary. To some degree, that reception reflects Jackson's stature as a national figure. But it also reflects the seriousness of the new fight CBS has on its hands. Blacks have long complained about network hiring policies, of course; only recently, however, have they decided to do something about it. And CBS seems to be groping for a response.

I wonder if the appearance by Wynton Marsalis was entirely coincidental.



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THE NEW REPUBLIC

The 'huh?' factor: untangling TV news

Viewers miss the point of most major stories, two researchers find. They explain why — and propose some fixes

by MARK R. LEVY and JOHN P. ROBINSON

Q. How good a job is TV news doing in informing its viewers?

A. Not as good as it could.

Q. What can TV journalists do to better inform viewers?

A. A lot, if they want to.

o show what's wrong with the way TV news is presented and to illustrate how it could be improved, we recently taped three arbitrarily chosen nights of network evening newscasts (March 12, 19, and 26). Watching these tapes a half dozen times or more, we were continually impressed by TV's capacity to gather, process, and present an amazing amount of information. It also seemed to us, however, that network news was sadly out of touch with its viewers and that it had little idea how to link up with the interests, needs, and capacities of its audience.

Take Dan Rather's March 19 lead story on the Contra aid bill, for example. The main point of that story clearly was President Reagan's willingness to compromise over the timing of aid to the "freedom fighters." But that main point, the major news of the day, was made only twice — once in Rather's convoluted forty-five-word lead-in, and again in Phil Jones's thirteen-second closer.

In between, viewers were shown, among other things, a largely decontextualized snippet of House debate (''If the president chooses to go on a binge with freedom-fighter firewater . . . ''); shots of *smiling* administration officials described as "pressuring any member willing to listen"; two crudely lettered intelligence photos ("obtained" by CBS News) of a Nicaraguan port and airfield; footage of laughing Republicans "huddled" in an effort to save the president's aid plan; and fourteen seconds' worth of a graphic that capsulized the proposed congressional compromise in phrases more suited to a national security directive than a TV newscast.

Viewers who had stuck with the story to that point then saw a three-day-old sound bite of President Reagan accusing the Sandinistas of religious persecution; four seconds of a Managua synagogue shot from so far away that it was impossible to tell whether the building had been vandalized (as Reagan was claiming); an American rabbi who "had been there" denying that Nicaragua's five Jewish families were in danger; an abrupt switch to the control room of a Texas radio station running pro-Contra ads; and a final jump, this time to a Florida congressman targeted by those ads who said the pro-Contras could "take their ad campaign and shove it."

And that's the way it was, in just under three minutes of airtime. What CBS had presented was news for insiders, an untidy package that leaped from one disconnected detail to another. It was a story that violated a rule for quality TV journalism promulgated almost twenty-five years ago by NBC newsman Reuven Frank. Every TV news story, Frank said, should be structured as a mini-drama, having "problem and denouement . . . a beginning, a middle, and an end."

Unfortunately, too much TV news is like that Contra aid story. Produced for people already in the know, it's filled with the jargon of policymakers and riddled with cryptic references to continu-

ing stories. What TV journalists forget is that most viewers need some help in understanding the news, no matter how often the story has been told.

have been studying what people learn — and don't learn — from watching TV news. From this research, we and other academics around the world have been trying to figure out how to make TV news more informative. Along the way, we have worked with top editors, producers, and researchers at the three U.S. networks, at Britain's BBC and ITV, and at major newspapers and wire services in the United States and England.

We asked those journalists what they thought the big stories of the day or week were, and what the one or two most important things were that the audience should have learned from their coverage. We then turned to surveys, focus groups, and experiments to find out how well the American and British news public picked up that information.

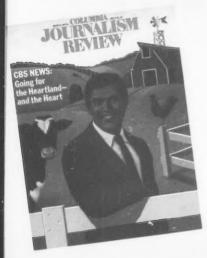
Over the years, we have probed public understanding about the main points of nearly a hundred such major news stories, ranging from the initial outbreak of AIDS to congressional debates over taxes and budgets to war jitters in Central America

Two findings consistently stand out:

• While the viewing public is not as ignorant as Barnum and Mencken would paint it, neither is it as well informed as some journalists assume or as civics textbooks say democracy requires. Our research has found that the average viewer fails to understand the main points in two-thirds of all major TV news stories.

To an optimist, of course, that means the audience *is* picking up one-third of the main points from important news stories. But while batting .333 may be su-

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perslugging in the major leagues, going one-for-three with TV newswatchers leaves journalism's heavy hitters with considerable room for improvement.

• TV is not the public's main source of news. Watching TV news adds little to most people's understanding of the news, beyond what they already know from newspapers and radio, and from talking to others. Indeed, people who watch TV news are only slightly better informed than people who don't, and, other things being equal, people who say TV is their main source for news are among the least well-informed members of the public.

Clearly, it is wrong to blame TV news for all, or even most, of the public's ignorance. Most viewers are easily distracted and don't share the working journalist's passion for news. On the other hand, the time and rewards for philosophical discussions about the information needs of a democracy are in short supply in most newsrooms, and rare indeed is the news director who would risk ratings points just to improve public understanding of the news.

Still, bottom-line pressures don't keep all broadcast journalists from feeling some responsibilities to their viewers. Thus, for example, NBC News president Lawrence K. Grossman said recently that his top priority is "to clarify, to explain, to write our scripts and file our reports in a style that makes what is happening as fully understandable as we can possibly make it to every one of our viewers."

Cynics might suggest that Grossman's top priority is to beat out Dan Rather. But — who knows? — a nightly newscast that was less muddled and more understandable might also help Grossman win over the larger audience that NBC News wants.

Here then are some things that are wrong with the way TV journalists currently put together their stories — and some strategies for making TV news more comprehensible:

Translation, please. One reason TV news fails to inform is that too often it uses language and concepts that are outside the viewer's normal vocabulary. Terms such as Gramm-Rudman, electronic countermeasures, rights of passage, and War Powers Act popped up regularly in the three programs we sampled — and just as regularly they went unexplained.

Most viewers need some kind of translation. On one newscast Tom Brokaw showed what can be done by taking the phrase "Contadora observers" and immediately explaining it as "a group of people from Central American and South American countries to go in to make an independent observation of the so-called battle site." Too often, though, the news might just as well have been written in Tagalog.

Say it again, Dan. Understandable language, however, will take broadcast news only so far. TV's words — and pictures — are still likely to go by too fast for people to latch on to, particularly since most viewers aren't paying all that

much attention in the first place. Our research shows it's not uncommon for people to wander in and out of the room when the news is on; other news viewers "watch" and simultaneously eat, quarrel, care for the kids, and even make love.

Slowing down the anchor's delivery may help (once Dan Rather gets rolling, his Texas drawl actually gallops off in bursts of more than 200 words per minute). Telling fewer stories at greater length will help more. And it wouldn't hurt to bear in mind that up to half of tonight's viewers probably didn't see last night's show and need a quick updating on what they missed.

Redundancy is a virtue. A jargonfree story, filled with clear and relevant details and told at sufficient length, still may not be well comprehended. Viewers often need to hear and see the same information more than once to understand it. Unfortunately, current industry practice does little to give viewers this muchneeded "information redundancy."

NBC's commonly used "cold" opening — a brief Brokaw voice-over tape preceding the Statue of Liberty logo — catches viewers off guard and squanders an opportunity to alert them to what's coming. The opening moments of the ABC and CBS newscasts aren't any more helpful, since both usually start out with a hard charge directly into the lead story.

There are many ways to inject information redundancy without literally repeating the news. Headlines at the top of the show ("Good evening, in tonight's news...") are one way. PBS's MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour uses this technique, although sometimes its headlines are too short or too far removed from the full-length stories to be of much help to viewers.

In place of headlines, ABC occasionally offers a reprise of the day's top story. But few viewers who didn't see or didn't understand the news the first time through are likely to gain much from a quick wrap-up at the end.

"Teasing" an upcoming story, however, is a meaningful way to prep viewers for the news. It can be done simply with an anchor-on-camera script that reads, "When we return, we'll have a report about . . ."). Or it can take the more complicated form of a bumper just



before the commercials that *combines* spoken news script with computer graphics or brief tape segments.

Bumpers without scripts ask too much of viewers, forcing them in ten seconds or less to read one or more captions and to make sense of one or more visuals. Obscure bumper captions like those we saw on the Rather show ("Help," "Of judges and judgment"), coupled with vacuous video (an unidentified man sitting in a meeting room, a woman yawning) are a certain recipe for viewer confusion.

Bells and whistles. Nifty as "paintboxes" and "squeeze-zooms" may be, their gee-wizardry can be detrimental to viewer understanding when they are used in stories read by an anchor or in correspondent reports. If the graphics are too busy or use symbols that are highly stylized or offbeat, that can make it difficult for viewers to decode the pictures. For example, out-of-context maps that make Nicaragua

look like a wedge of badly cut Swiss cheese or reproductions of obscure flags and logos can distract viewers from hearing the news script — and it is by ear that most news information is taken in.

Many computer graphics could be improved if aesthetics took a back seat to improving comprehension. Schematic drawings (for example, a video artist's rendering of a rupturing space shuttle Oring) can often help viewers follow cause and effect relations in the news. By themselves, though, computer-generated maps, collages, or line drawings are not worth a thousand words. They add value only by reinforcing and highlighting the spoken story line.

Pix and scripts. Matching pictures and script is necessary, of course, for tape as well as graphics. While extraordinarily vivid or emotional tape will probably be remembered and understood without much help from the script, more routine stories may be actually less well

understood if the video and script are not explicitly reinforcing. We once analyzed a story about an airplane *crash* which confused viewers because, for several days after the crash, all they heard and saw were voice-overs using stock footage of other planes *safely* landing and taking off.

While it goes against newsroom dicta ("Let the pictures tell the story"), explaining to viewers exactly what they're seeing is often the only way to ensure understanding. A number of stories we looked at — reports on Contra guerrillas fleeing from a rocket attack; Challenger salvage ships bobbing in the sea off Florida; oil rigs in Texas, possibly capped, never to pump again — cried out for narration that would tell viewers why those pictures were on the screen.

The "so-what?" test. TV news also puzzles viewers because so much of it seems to be little more than one damn thing after another. It's news that's long on who, what, where, and when but short on a particular kind of why — why the story is important in the first place. That's too bad because while it is fairly easy for viewers to remember concrete details like a name or location, they often have trouble grasping the implications of events in the news.

The solution is to let viewers in on the "so-what?" test. It's used implicitly all the time in the newsroom to decide if something is newsworthy. Why, for example, was it important that a space suit had been recovered from the shuttle wreckage; or what impact was the Nicaraguan incursion into Honduras having on the Contra aid debate? The TV journalists who covered that news knew the answers; they had to in order to get their stories on the air. But most reports in our March sample never explicitly conveyed that "so what?" element of the news. Sometimes it was there - between the lines. But in our experience, information reported between the lines tends to remain there.

As Walter Cronkite once observed, "Broadcast journalism is never going to substitute for print in the total spectrum of communications. It's only the first step in being informed." But first step or main source, TV news reaches too many people for broadcast journalists to remain blissfully ignorant of when they do and don't inform the public.

Rewriting Rather

Here are two versions of the same news story: on the left, Dan Rather's report from *The CBS Evening News* of April 23; on the right, our reworking of the Rather script. Our script knowingly violates a number of basic conventions of broadcast writing style, because, research shows, that style often interferes with public understanding of the news.

For starters, we deliberately back into the story in order to clarify the sequence of events and to bring viewers who missed yesterday's news up to speed. Next, we take a potentially obscure phrase ('the House') and tell viewers whose house—'the House of Representatives.' Then we delete a needless piece of jargon ('rule change') and an unnecessary statistic (the exact vote: '333 to 68').

Our rewrite takes about three seconds longer to tell — a small price to pay, we think, for increased comprehension. Besides, that extra time could be easily squeezed out of other stories or, better yet, the total number of stories could be reduced and each could be told at greater length.

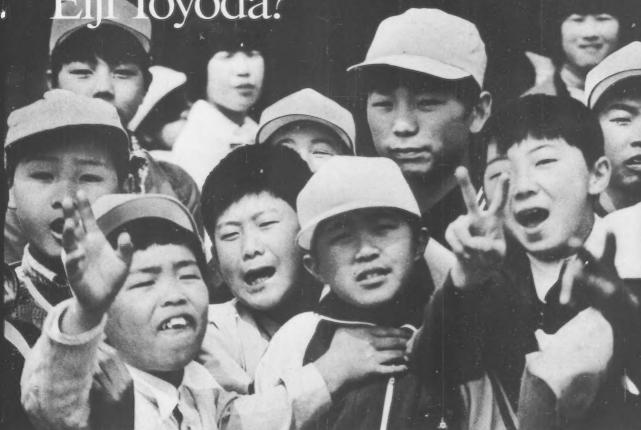
Rather

Nervous about public reaction in an election year, the House voted overwhelmingly today to undo yesterday's surprise rule change that allowed members to earn more from outside speeches and writing. Today's vote to cancel the increase was 333 to 68. House members say they need extra income to afford staying in governmental service. Critics say these outside earnings for speeches and writing are paid for by lobbyists.

Rather revised

Yesterday the House of Representatives voted to allow its members to earn more money from outside speeches and writing. Today it reversed itself, voting overwhelmingly to keep the old limit on outside income. House members say they need extra money to make ends meet. Critics charge they earn most of this money making speeches paid for by lobbyists. With elections only six months away, House members feared their moonlighting income might become a campaign issue.

In Japan, a 12-year old can tell you about Lee Iacocca. What do you know about Eiji Toyoda?



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Pantheon Books. 387 pp. \$18.95

by PETER SCHRAG

aybe it wasn't the con job of the century, but in the field of journalism it's hard to think of anything else that comes even close. A small-time swindler and forger named Konrad Kujau creates not just the fiftyeight volumes of phony documents that take in the corporate executives of the German mass-circulation magazine Stern and its parent companies, the editors of Newsweek, and the wise men hired by Rupert Murdoch to check the documents out. Kujau, alias Doctor Fischer, alias the Professor, alias the General, also palms off hundreds of other fake Nazi relics - flags, medals, letters, certificates, the gun Hitler was supposed to have committed suicide with, the suit he wore in 1933 when he became chancellor, the original draft agreement with Chamberlain at Munich, each complete with what are supposed to be documents signed by Rudolf Hess or Martin Bormann authenticating all these fakes. The more fakes Kujau created, the more credible they appeared to the suckers who bought them.

There is a deadly serious theme in Robert Harris's book: most simply put, the continuing fascination in the West with Hitler and Hitler memorabilia—not the demented Hitler of the Holocaust, but the Hitler of diplomacy and war strategy, of fancy uniforms and Eva Braun, Hitler as in springtime for . . .

Mel Brooks discovered a long time ago that all this had the makings of low farce. But here it also becomes the stuff

Peter Schrag is the editorial page editor of The Sacramento Bee.

of Molierian comedy, a morality tale in which greed and fascist sentimentality ultimately lead to the downfall that these checkbook journalists and swastika sniffers deserve. It is that story that Harris, a BBC television journalist, assembles and tells in all its wonderful detail. The result is probably the best book about contemporary journalism in more than a decade and certainly the most entertaining.

The chief patsy in this tale is a Stern reporter-photographer named Gerd Heidemann, who, more or less fortuitously, slipped into Germany's demi-monde of ex-Nazis, Nazi lovers, collectors of Nazi memorabilia, and the dealers and hustlers who cater to them. Because the display of Nazi relics is frowned on under postwar German law, the stuff is rarely subject to real authentication and thus becomes fertile ground for forgers like "Conny" Kujau. Heidemann in fact owned some genuine stuff, most notably Hermann Goering's eighty-foot yacht, Carin II, along with various pieces of Goering glassware, monogrammed table silver, pictures, documents, and, as a prize come-on to his Nazi-phile friends, one of the fat field marshal's old uniforms, all of which he hoped someday to turn into a floating Goering memorial. But he was no more capable of telling the genuine from the fake than he was of mastering the art of journalistic detachment. Part gull, part hustler, once he had caught the scent of the diaries at that point Kujau had apparently faked just one volume - he was convinced they were real. In the last days of the war Hitler had tried to ship a planeload of stuff from Berlin to Berchtesgaden. The plane crashed in what is now East Germany and Heidemann was certain that, although the plane burned, the "diaries" had survived. The fact that there was no evidence that Hitler had ever kept a diary (and a great deal that he had not) didn't bother him. But then neither did it bother the British historian Hugh Trevor-Roper, who was brought in to authenticate the diaries by Murdoch's Sunday Times of London, nor any of the other experts who studied the documents.

Heidemann's editorial superiors at Stern knew he was flaky on the subject of the Nazis. (Accompanied by a former SS general named Karl Wolff, he had devoted his honeymoon with his third wife to running around South America looking for Josef Mengele and Bormann, in whose survival he devoutly believed; subsequently he tried to toady up to Klaus Barbie for help in setting up his Goering collection.) But Heidemann and another Stern staffer managed secretly to go over their editors' heads to the corporate management at Gruner and Jahr, which owns the magazine. Not only were there twenty-seven Hitler diaries, Heidemann said (repeating what Kujau had told him), there were also the original draft of Mein Kampf and the score of an opera, Wieland The Black*smith*, that Hitler supposedly had written as a young man. Most of the material was still in East Germany, where it was hidden after the plane crash and whence it would have to be brought. Heidemann said that his source was related to an East German general who would help spirit it out, but it would still entail considerable risk. For security's sake, he, Heidemann, should be the only one trusted to deal with the supplier.

ncredibly, the ambitious moguls at Gruner and Jahr agreed: what a scoop this would be! They would pay 85,000 marks (roughly \$40,000) a volume, with a down payment of 200,000 marks, for a total of better than 2 million marks, all of it to be delivered to Kujau in cash by Gerd Heidemann. Before the end, as more documents were "discovered" and as Heidemann secretly skimmed bigger and bigger portions off the top, the ante would go up to

200,000 marks per volume; eventually, the diaries would cost *Stern* an estimated 9 million marks, better than \$4 million. Of that sum, Heidemann appears to have taken 2 to 4 million marks for himself.

Even reading the details now, it's hard to understand why Stern (or Newsweek or Murdoch, who bid furiously against one another for the U.S. rights) didn't demand more thorough authentication of the stuff they were buying. There were examinations by handwriting experts, one an American who couldn't read German, much less the now-obsolete German gothic script in which these volumes were written; unfortunately, some of the comparison documents they were given were themselves Kujau fakes. But there was no serious attempt to subject the paper or bindings to tests that would immediately have shown, as they eventually did, that the notebooks in which Kujau wrote, and which he sprinkled with tea to make them look older, had been manufactured after World War II.

Nor did Stern ever submit the documents to Eberhard Jaeckel, Germany's leading Hitler scholar, a man who had himself been taken in by some Kujau fakes and, having been once burned, most likely would have recognized the forgeries at once. As Harris points out, once the principals were embarked on their venture, they wanted as desperately to believe in the diaries as Kujau wanted them to. The rush to go to press precluded even the careful check that the German national archives would have given them. What clinched the matter for Trevor-Roper, who never really read the diaries, was the idea that no forger would fake a Hitler signature, as the arrogant Kujau in fact had done, on each page of his work.

n the end, of course, the whole thing was exposed within days of publication. There were too many people out there who knew better: historians, chemists, archivists, journalists.

Kujau's diary entries had been taken almost entirely from a daily chronicle of official acts published in 1962 - lists of meetings, proclamations, promotions. (Where the published volume got a date or a fact wrong, Kujau's diaries got it wrong as well.) As a result, the documents were incredibly dull. With the exception of material indicating that Hitler had known and secretly supported Hess's dramatic flight to Britain - ostensibly to seek a separate peace with the British - they contained nothing new, much less anything deeply personal or revealing. Any competent historian, any intelligent and reasonably learned journalist, had he or she been allowed to read the material, would have known that. But none, of course, ever was. The stuff was bid on and bought - and published and hyped - without anyone having really seen the goods.

Harris's book is based on interviews, on the report of an internal investigation that *Stern* conducted to determine how



this disaster occurred, and on the evidence presented at the trial of the principals, but none of it is specifically cited. Harris says that he promised anonymity to many of his sources, which in a story like this is understandable. Yet even footnotes or endnotes referring specifically to the documents he credits would have helped, particularly in a book whose whole subject is journalistic authenticity. Thus the reader sometimes finds himself groping around the back of the book, wishing for an additional piece of data, looking not so much for evidence as for additional information.

Yet that hardly undermines its elegance or the fun of reading it, much less its plausibility. When Kujau's fraud first came to light (in 1983), there were all sorts of cockamamie theories — Moscow's that it was all a CIA concoction to breathe new life into German militarism, Jeane Kirkpatrick's that it was the work of the Soviet disinformation network. But none of that ever made sense. No Soviet disinformation machine would have been as clumsy nor, one hopes, would the CIA. Neither could have expected to be as lucky.

Three years ago, as the foxes and the gulls were being exposed, Newsweek, which had bitten eagerly into the poisoned apple, published its immortal hedge: speculations about Hitler, it said, "have been trivialized for years in gaudy paperback thrillers and made-for-television movies. Now the appearance of Hitler's diaries — genuine or not, it almost doesn't matter in the end — reminds us of the horrible reality on which our doubts about ourselves, and each other, are based."

That phrase — "it almost doesn't matter" — may not have been the low point of responsible American journalism in this decade, but it was close. It was also as slick an epigram as this story is likely to have. For Heidemann and his bosses at Stern and, by its own confession, for Newsweek, it truly almost didn't matter, even at the risk of reincarnating and rehabilitating the greatest monster of our century. For their sins, Heidemann and Kujau went to jail; Stern lost a bundle; Newsweek and the London Sunday Times got a bad black eye, assuming such a thing is possible for a

Murdoch paper. ("Nothing ventured, nothing gained," Murdoch is said to have said afterwards. "After all, we are in the entertainment business.") Under the circumstances, one might have asked for stiffer retribution, but by the standards of good classical comedy, everything considered, it was fitting enough.

Funny business

"And So It Goes": Adventures in Television by Linda Ellerbee Putnam. 255 pp. \$16.95

by NEIL HICKEY

Hers is a book without a hero or a moral, writes Linda Ellerbee near the start of her breezy, blowzy, raffish, flip, and funny report on life in the television journalism business. That business, she insists, is a craft, not a calling — not brain surgery or nuclear physics. "It's television. It's *only* television."

Perhaps you've seen her on the screen: she's the one with the oversized eyeglasses who seems to be telling you the news from the next barstool. These days you can catch her most Fridays on the *Today* show doing a four-minute turn in which she spins a few yarns from the week's news that were too quirky and quaint to win the attention of the show's first-string newsreader.

Earlier, though, she pounded the TV news beat for Houston's KHOU and New York's WCBS and then covered the House of Representatives for NBC News. "There were 435 congenial clowns there," she announces, "and if you fired a shot into their midst, they rode off in 435 legislative directions, all talking at once." Then came the NBC newsmagazine Weekend, one of that network's many failed attempts to create a counterfeit of 60 Minutes. NBC News Overnight was next — a considerable succès d'estime with a cult following of discriminating insomniacs and night watchmen, the program which the DuPont-Columbia award people called "possibly the best-written and most intelligent news program, ever," but

Neil Hickey is New York bureau chief for TV Guide.

which some others thought was more than a bit arch, smug, and self-indulgent. Summer Sunday USA, her most recent series, was a doomed and hapless venture whose interred bones are best left undisturbed. Ellerbee claims that, since every show that had her as a regular has been cancelled, she now considers the thirty-four-year-old Today show to be her greatest challenge.

In spite of all the slapstick in her book, Linda Ellerbee is clearly serious about her journalism. She's contemptuous of the Twinkies — those perky, oleaginous, desperately amiable anchorpersons with the blow-dried brains who fill America's television screens. She freely confesses her own "overdeveloped ego and . . . galloping ambition" and thinks she may be a "self-absorbed jerk." She was a sixties activist who contracted politics, talked revolution, and ate brown rice before stumbling into journalism (she quit school at nineteen) because she needed the money to raise her children.

Ellerbee is now an old hand at the TV journalism game, and has pertinent things to say about it. For example, she points out that before President Kennedy was shot, television newscasts were loss



leaders for their networks, but as soon as they became cash cows, TV executives began applying to them some of the same criteria as to the entertainment shows:

In television the product is not the program; the product is the audience and the consumer of that product is the advertiser. The advertiser does not "buy" a news program. He buys an audience. The manufacturer (network) that gets the highest price for its product is the one that produces the most product (audience). . . . The value of any news program is measured by whether it increases productivity; the best news program, therefore, is the one watched by the greatest number of people. . . . Altruists do not own television stations or networks, nor do they run them. Businessmen own and run them. Journalists work for businessmen. Journalists get fired and canceled by businessmen. That is how it is.

Underestimating the intelligence of viewers is a ''condition of the trade,'' she avers, and it's that disregard for people's minds ''that has turned so many network newscasts into the Sermon on the Mount and so many local television newscasts into the Gospel According to the Cute. No wonder people laugh at television news and those of us who make it.''

Aside from a few such bouts of thumbsucking, Ellerbee's book is mostly yarn-spinning; some of the tales are lively, some are lame, the kinds of stories NBC people like to tell in Hurley's bar. Like the time Ellerbee was covering the 1980 New Hampshire primary and included in her film report a shot of Walter Cronkite and John Chancellor drinking at the bar of a local motel. She liked the shot because it reminded her of Mount Rushmore having a tête-à-tête with itself. The unamused president of NBC News, however, suggested she sit out the next round of primaries.

During that same campaign she trailed presidential aspirant George Bush through a bitter cold New England winter — a knitted cap pulled down over her ears, her eyes and nose running, an ungloved hand frozen to an extra light she was toting for her cameraman — peppering Bush with questions which he summarily brushed off. That bewildered her until she overheard Bush whisper to

a colleague: "Jesus, is *she* pushy! Why is an electrician asking me questions, anyway?" Covering a politician's run for destiny is not her strong suit, Ellerbee concludes. "I don't look the part."

Unfailingly generous toward her coworkers and engagingly self-deprecatory, Linda Ellerbee is clearly one of the good guys, a laborer who is at once respectful of her trade and alert to its sillier aspects. Her book is a good, brisk, entertaining read for anybody with a morbid curiosity about what television journalism is like from the inside.

A very special working stiff

Red: A Biography of Red Smith by Ira Berkow Times Books. 294 pp. \$17.95

by PETER ANDREWS

That Red Smith was generally regarded as the best, most influential sportswriter and columnist of the last fifty years is hardly a matter of discussion. The question is, what was it that made him so good?

Was it the funny stories he told? There was this horse player who prayed to God for a winner. "Please Lord," the man said, "let him get out in front." Reverentially, the man watched as God steered his horse out of the pack and brought him to a two-lengths lead by the eighth pole. "Thank you, Lord," the guy said, "I'll take him from here. Come on, you son of a bitch."

Was it the wonderful lines that peppered his column for two generations? It was Smith who coined the oft-quoted description of an aging Willie Mays as "a folk hero whose future is behind him."

Was it the original way he had of doing the commonplace and making it fresh? At a time when the rest of the sportswriting clan was routinely substituting "bleep" for some of the startling linguistic lapses of athletes, Smith once recreated Babe Ruth's manner of speech

Peter Andrews is a free-lance writer with a particular interest in sports history.

by writing, "He remembered how he'd really got his adjectival shoulders into a swing and had knocked the indelicacy ball against the Anglo-Saxon hotel out there."

All of these possible explanations and more are neatly laid out in this first-rate biography of Red Smith by *New York Times* sportswriter Ira Berkow.

For myself, I had always thought it was simply his sentences: straightforward, knife-edged declarative sentences without an ounce of fat on them that got onto the page and went straight to work carrying the story. When I was a kid first starting to read about sports, I read Red Smith not because he was taught at Yale or because he was admired by Robert Frost and Ernest Hemingway. I read him because I could understand him. He instructed me and he made me laugh, but what was most important, reading Red Smith was like being taken to the World's Fair by a trusted uncle. No matter how complex the situation, I knew he would never leave me and he would help me understand what I was seeing.

I was glad to find that Berkow has this base covered as well. In a particularly evocative passage, he traces Smith back to a journalism course at Notre Dame taught in a basement room of the library building by John Michael Cooney. Cooney must have been a superb teacher. He frequently began classes by clasping his hands and intoning, "Let us pray for sense." Cooney was a bear for strict, specific English. As one former student recalled, Cooney wanted "no jargon, no gobbledygook. He liked to see a sentence so definite it would cast a shadow."

Smith carried those lessons with him and made them his life's work. Years later, Smith recounted Cooney's dictum that newspaper work is knowing, not writing. "The essential thing," Smith said, "is to report the facts; if there is time for good writing as well, that's frosting on the cake."

That was the essence of Red Smith's newspaper career. Nobody ever did the frosting better than Red Smith. But, in his heart, he was always an honest baker.

Smith frequently wrote about his sports column in a self-deprecating man-

ner. He referred to himself as "the tenant in this literary flophouse" and he loved to recite the old wheeze that writing a column was like being married to a nymphomaniac in that "as soon as you're finished, you've got to start over again."

This was largely a pose. Smith knew he was good. But it was surely a pose to be preferred to many of the pouter pigeon media figures of today who would rather preside over a story than report one. Red Smith was proud to be a working stiff.

Berkow, a childhood admirer of Red Smith who later worked with him on the *Times*, has, understandably, written a celebratory biography. As he says in the introduction, "my high opinion of him was never diminished." He does a fine

'Reading Red Smith was like being taken to the World's Fair by a trusted uncle'



job of tracing Smith's early background as a skilled but unhappy rewrite man who stumbled into sportswriting as a way to get away from copy editing and headline writing. As a good literary biographer should, Berkow lets us see Smith develop the style that would come to final flower at the *New York Herald Tribune*, where for more than twenty years he wrote his best stuff. Working as a junior sports reporter for the *St. Louis Star* in 1929 he covered the arrival of the dreaded New York Yankees thus:

Society Note: Among the distinguished visitors arriving last night at Union Station was Mr. George Herman Babe Ruth, large, very large New York clubman. . . .

"A very charming little city," Mr. G.H.B. Ruth remarked graciously as he eased his avoirdupois from the Pullman, "very charming indeed. St. Louis, if memory serves, is the home of short right-field fences and receptive right-field seats. I have business here."

Young, but vintage Red Smith.

Sometimes, Berkow's closeness to his subject ties his hands. He seems to be trying to tell us that Smith was probably an alcoholic but he cannot bring himself to come out and say it. (The Tribune was a notoriously hard-drinking newspaper. I grew up in a Tribune family. My father, Bert Andrews, who started there as a rewrite man and eventually became Washington bureau chief, was not without his problems in that area as well. One of my vivid childhood memories was seeing Stanley Woodward, the great Tribune sports editor, at our apartment in Washington. He was the drunkest human being I had or have ever seen who was still standing up and moving his lips. Nothing came out of them, but they were distinctly moving.)

Additionally, Berkow does not fully develop the great Pulitzer Prize uproar of 1956 when the committee, in giving out the first prize to be awarded for general sportswriting, bypassed Smith and gave it to Arthur Daley, who wrote a perfectly nice, plodding column for *The New York Times*. This was at a time when Smith held roughly the same position as a sportswriter in New York that Shakespeare held as a dramatist in Elizabethan England. Berkow makes it clear that Smith was hurt and the rest of the

profession was stunned by the award, but he leaves it at that. Just how the award was engineered is one of those stories that cry out to be explained. The assumption at the time was that the *Times* used its legendary muscle in such matters to win it for their man. Twenty years later, the Pulitzer committee tried to make amends by giving Smith, then with the *Times*, the award. Smith, who had said he would refuse the palm if it were ever offered, changed his mind, saying, "Seventy-year-old crocks who are bitter are boring," and accepted it.

Berkow builds his story well and his account of the period when Smith was nearing seventy-five and frequently needed physical help from some of the younger reporters to cover stories is deeply touching. One of the sincerest compliments one old-time newspaperman could pay to another was to say, "He carries his own typewriter." But what a singular honor it was to carry Red Smith's.

n the more than forty years he wrote about sports, Red Smith stuck to his last. Except for one children's book he wrote in 1945 to help put food on the table he almost never left daily journalism. He never wrote an adult novel or a full-length nonfiction book of any kind. He wrote a few magazine articles and while they were smooth and professional - he couldn't write any other way they weren't particularly distinguished. But at his job, writing a regular newspaper sports column, he stood supreme. Shortly after he started at the Tribune, Smith was one of several reporters covering the World Series. Each of them, except Smith, had a specific assignment. Thinking there would be nothing left for him, he asked Woodward, "What do you want me to write about?"

"Write about the smell of cabbage in the hallway," Woodward replied.

For the rest of his life, Red Smith strove to do just that. In sharp, literate essays, he brought us the pungent odor of sport and made it smell sweetly. And in doing so, he did that thing that all of us who read about sports want most of all. As Berkow so perceptively points out, Red Smith made the game "last a little longer."

NASA's failure surprised
The New York Times and
The Washington Post, Time,
Newsweek, and the three
television networks.

It didn't surprise us.

Six years before the fatal launching of the Challenger, *The Washington Monthly* was questioning the space shuttle's safety. Gregg Easterbrook wrote, "Here's the plan. Suppose one of the solid-fueled boosters fails. The plan is, you die."



C156

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Topic A:
"Twelve Months
of This
Every Year," a
drawing by
H. T. Webster,
appeared
in the Chicago
Inter-Ocean
at the turn of
the century.

How it all began

The Power of the Press: The Birth of American Political Reporting

by Thomas C. Leonard Oxford University Press, 273 pp. \$22.50

by JAMES BOYLAN

By tradition and habit, politics is the stuff (and stuffing) of the American press, to the degree that the predominance of political reporting is all but taken for granted and its consequences only fitfully examined. Thomas C. Leonard, a historian on the faculty of journalism at the University of California at Berkeley, has made such an examination by searching out the historical roots of political journalism.

The result is a bumpy ride through nearly 200 years of press history, with touchdowns at widely spaced intervals: the assault in 1721 by James Franklin, assisted by his younger brother Ben, on Massachusetts authorities for ordering smallpox inoculation; the exposés in the Boston press of the behavior of British occupying troops in 1768-1769 (a chapter that appeared in a longer, more satisfactory version six years ago in *The Journal of American History*); the development before the Civil War of the practice of reporting in print what poli-

ticians say, or would like to have said; the exposure by the caricaturist Thomas Nast and *The New York Times* of the Tweed Ring after the Civil War; the development of crime reporting and of the eventual linking of criminals and politicians; Joseph Pulitzer's exposés as a publisher, in his pre-New York days in St. Louis; and, finally, the turn-of-thecentury magazine exposés of municipal, state, and federal corruption — that is, muckraking.

Leonard proposes a number of themes that link these episodes:

- The appearance of controversy in the press legitimized political diversity and argument in a culture that initially shunned both.
- The exposé, usually linking politicians to criminals or to criminal behavior, has been the staple of political journalism.
- The process of exposure has often preceded, distorted, or even disregarded fact. For example, Leonard points out that Nast's drawings accused the Tweed Ring of corruption before the facts of that corruption became available.
- Political reporting has had deleterious, as well as beneficial, effects on the
 political system, contributing both to the
 breakup of the party system before the
 Civil War and, in the Progressive period,
 to the decline of mass participation in
 politics.

These are challenging enough conten-

tions and the evidence that Leonard summons for them is apt and often original, even when it falls short of being convincing. Such is the case, for example, with his thesis that the negativity of muckraking contributed to a decline in voter turnout. There is little doubt about the negativity or the decline, but linking them proves difficult. Ultimately, Leonard settles for an assertion that "the language for politics in the investigative magazines is one of the few innovations of the Progressive Era pervasive enough to account for the broad withdrawal from elections." This could be considered a kind of miasma theory of journalism.

The style of the book seems to work against its ideas. Generalizations are often stated obscurely: "The hour glass through which eighteenth-century political debate drained into print was meant to be stopped by many hands." And despite the subtitle, political reporting and reporters do not stay in the book's focus; indeed, the long section concerning the dissemination of pre-Civil War politicians' speeches almost loses sight of journalism.

Il this said, The Power of the Press remains an ambitious departure in journalism history, a field still overburdened with biographies of editors, publishers, and institutions. Leonard has attempted to push the boundaries in the direction of considering the substance of journalism and of bringing to bear work in other disciplines, such as political science.

Finally, the study is rich in implications - far too little discussed in the book — for the role of political reporting in our own era. Leonard quotes, in apparent agreement, a finding by the political scientist Michael J. Robinson that political news on television makes unsophisticated viewers "more cynical, more frustrated, more despairing" and "increasingly less enamored of their social and political institutions." Such a conclusion calls into question the whole notion that a democratic system benefits from an informed public. Indeed, this is an implication that can be read into Leonard's entire chronicle and one that deserves thorough exploration rather than a few hints.

James Boylan teaches journalism at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Doubletake on Fonzi

TO THE REVIEW:

Re: "From Adelaide to Raymond to Manes," by Bernard McCormick (CJR, May/June). Gaeton Fonzi's excellent piece was indeed handed in to us at Miami/South Florida five times longer than the assigned wordage. We reduced it to a manageable size with Gaeton's grudging participation and many days of effort by our staff. As to McCormick's assertion that "he refused to attach his usual by-line . . . [and] the credit read, 'research by Gaeton Fonzi,' "if Bernie had looked at the article he would have seen that the by-line read "Reported by Gaeton Fonzi."

Gaeton deserves high praise for his story and his dogged investigation. But Bernie McCormick slid by a few items that cast an unfortunate shadow on the magazine. For one thing, it was not Gaeton's information-seeking calls that brought FBI and Justice Department people hurrying to Miami. That happened when I was shown the story by our editors and insisted that the FBI have an opportunity to respond, in the story itself, to our accusations that the bureau was shielding a murder suspect from local law officials by hiding him in their secret-witness program. Gaeton made that call in the morning and the Chicago men were here that afternoon, in my office.

Again, Bernie says we finally grew "impatient" and printed the story. We delayed the story three times at the insistence of the FBI and the Justice Department that it would blow their expensive and important investigation and that publication "could get somebody killed." We told the FBI that the story would be printed in our January 1986 issue and Chicago wanted it held over for yet another issue but the Washington people stood by their January issue release agreement. We gave the FBI plenty of notice so their secret, videotaped payoff room could be closed down.

Gaeton deserves his laurels but I think CJR deserves a Dart for ignoring the professional and ethical implications of the story. You might have explored the same ethical issues we tussled with in our shop in hours of debate about the delay and the implications thereof, to wit:

Did we perform ethically or unethically in withholding the story so long? Should we blow a major FBI investigation when the FBI was using a big-league sleazeball as its key operative? Were we helping a Republican Department of Justice turn the screws on a crowd of black Chicago Democratic office-holders? Should we have ignored the FBI's appeals? Obviously, as good citizens we felt we could not, but we didn't like the game. (And, of course, we did want as much information from the FBI as we could get.) Finally, did the FBI err in giving us such detailed but embargoed information?

SYLVAN MEYER Publisher Miami/South Florida Miami, Fla.

The editors reply: Regarding the mistaken credit line, we regret the error, which was introduced in the editing process.

The debate over public TV

TO THE REVIEW:

To cure the creeping commercialization of public television all we have to do is convert it into pay television. That is the twisted logic proposed by the Labor Department's Everson Hull in his letter to the Review ("Unfinished Business," CJR, May/June). Talk about throwing the baby out with the bath water!

What public television needs is to insulate its producers more from politics and sponsors — not less. The more the political and corporate interests apply their brand of therapy to the problems of public broadcasting, the worse the patient has fared.

Just look at what is now passed off as a "documentary" on PBS: "Hackers — Wizards of the Electronic Age." Aired on April 22, this hour-long "special," supposedly about the evolution of computer technology, was financed by the computer industry — including the Apple Computer Corporation — and by Apple co-founder Stephen Wozniak. So were we surprised that the Macin-

tosh was the program's computer of choice, or that Wozniak was referred to as "a hero" in the first graph of the script? Surprised? A little. Disappointed? A lot. Even the "commercial networks" couldn't get away with that!

KEVIN BOYLE Palm Springs, Calif.

Manila: a P.S.

TO THE REVIEW:

As the author of *The Washington Post*'s article dealing with the activities of Ferdinand Marcos during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines in World War II, I would like to correct one assertion made by David Haward Bain, the author of "Letter From Manila" (CJR, May/June). Contrary to what Mr. Bain wrote, that article did not draw on any research done by Professor Alfred McCoy. The research was wholly my own.

JOHN SHARKEY Staff writer/foreign news The Washington Post Washington, D.C.

Leaky water story?

TO THE REVIEW:

Congratulations to Roger Morris for exploring coverage of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation ("Reclaiming the Reclamation Beat," CJR, March/April). The link between the news media and the bureau is incestuous, has existed too long, and is a giant blemish on the whole journalism industry. Western newspapers have a natural interest in the Bureau of Reclamation, created by Congress in 1902 to encourage settlers of the West. It is a reciprocal relationship with inevitable conflicts, but other journalists have failed to raise obvious questions.

Do we get good water reporting here? As a daily reader of the state's biggest newspaper, *The Arizona Republic*, for twenty years, I can tell you that the \$4 billion Central Arizona Project and other water schemes are constantly pushed. An incessant stream of editorials whips our politicians to get more and more funding from Washington. Opposing views are seldom allowed to surface.

I especially remember a twelve-page special report on the Central Arizona Project published by *The Arizona Republic*. In a letter to the editor, dated December 18, 1983, I complained that it showed an extreme overliance on government sources, that twenty-three of twenty-four people interviewed had vested interests, that only one short paragraph out of the twelve pages had been given to a lone independent expert with a different view, and his name was misspelled. (My letter was not published but two letters praising the special report were. One was from the hen state water director, the other from the Arizona Projects Manager, Bureau of Reclamation.)

Ironically, the strongest thing ever published against the status quo was by *The Arizona Republic* in a February 21, 1985, column by editorial writer J. J. Casserly, and was about a book which argues for the abolishment of the Bureau of Reclamation: *How to Create a Water Crisis*, by Phoenix civil engineer Frank Welsh. So far as I know, no other Arizona newspaper has reviewed his book.

CAROLINA BUTLER Scottsdale, Ariz.

TO THE REVIEW:

Roger Morris's observations on the 1983

GJR Internships

Applications are now being accepted for the fall program. Interns will work closely with editors on a wide range of research, writing, and production projects.

These positions are unsalaried, but interns will be paid at customary rates for any writing they may publish during their tenure. Interns may be enrolled concurrently in a college or university; they may also be unaffiliated. Positions are both part- and full-time.

Applicants should send their resumes, a writing sample, two references, and a letter explaining their interest to:

Gloria Cooper, Managing Editor Columbia Journalism Review 700 Journalism Building Columbia University New York, N.Y. 10027 Colorado River flood are at least disputable and probably wrong. Thus, one could cover the story as he suggests and not get any closer to the complex reality of water in the West than the coverage he criticizes.

He ignores the treaties, compacts, court decrees, and laws that allocate water from the Colorado and govern the Bureau of Reclamation's operation of it. The law (as well as the often-conflicting demands placed on the river) is both the cause and the result of the fear and greed that make the bureau more the lap dog of western water interests than the rogue elephant he portrays.

There is abundant evidence that the Colorado River reservoirs were brimming in 1983 not to generate power, as Morris claims, but to store water for downstream agricultural, municipal, and industrial use. At congressional hearings on September 7 and 8, 1983, officials of flood-ravaged Arizona and California defended the bureau's conduct that year, arguing that storing water—rather than emptying reservoirs for flood control or power generation—is essential if water is to be available for irrigation in drought years. (Incidentally, it is the *states*' water, not the bureau's or the Western Area Power Administration's.)

One witness from California's Metropolitan Water District said: "Our primary interest is in the water conservation aspect of river operations. . . . Therefore, we are concerned with any action that might reduce the amount of water in storage. Storage must be maximized so that . . . there will be supplies to meet demands."

There was also testimony that power generation was actually reduced early in 1983 for just that reason, contrary to Morris's assertion that full reservoirs reflect "the high priority placed on keeping the government's profitable hydroelectric generators running at top capacity." The city of Los Angeles department of water and power complained that bureau water-storage decisions resulted in \$29.7 million in fossil-fuel power production costs that could have been avoided if the bureau had really done what Morris accuses it of doing.

The Western Area Power Administration itself was critical of the bureau's full-reservoir policy. On December 10, 1983, *The Artizona Republic* quoted a WAPA official as saying, "Water should not be conserved in a pattern that might result in . . . generation curtailment. . . ." He added that the full reservoirs in 1983 actually resulted in a loss of millions of dollars in potential power.

Yet not once does Morris mention water conservation and its role in the high water of 1983. Morris says the Los Angeles Times "unfortunately" failed to publish stories on the policies that left the reservoirs high in 1983. Not so. See the *Times* of February 20 and April 12, 1984.

Morris blames a "high turnover rate on this beat [that] affects coverage not only of the smaller papers but also that of . . . the Los Angeles Times." I've been in Denver six years and, contrary to Morris, I'm not awaiting "what seem to be bigger stories" elsewhere.

Morris is right in arguing for more and better coverage of the bureau. But I doubt that his flawed examination of the events of 1983 will provide the basis for a muchneeded, closer examination of the state, regional, and local interest groups that whipsaw the bureau.

BILL CURRY Denver bureau chief Los Angeles Times Denver, Colo.

Roger Morris replies: Mr. Curry reiterates the forty-year-old Reclamation briefing staple which casts the bureau in the role of helpless victim of the greedy compact states. If that were ever true, it certainly has not been the case in recent years. Reservoirs in 1983 were far higher than was required by any downstream storage demand. Levels began to rise to historic and dangerous heights in 1978-79, all of which may be traced in the lake elevations recorded in the federally published "Operating Plan for the Colorado River Storage Project." Why the dangerous levels, leaving no room for flood runoff? Look at three exemplary clips from a distinguished western newspaper:

- "In 1977 the newly created Department of Energy expropriated part of the Bureau of Reclamation from the Interior Department. Since then the Western Area Power Administration, part of the Energy Empire, has controlled the releases from the Interior's dams." (July 1, 1983)
- "The Bureau of Reclamation, under the Reagan administration, has placed particular emphasis upon maximizing hydroelectricpower generation in its operations." (July 3, 1983)
- "The proper course would have been to start making room for the runoff by dumping water from the too-full reservoirs before the melt began. But the federal Bureau of Reclamation, which is responsible not only for guarding against floods but also for water storage, turned to hoarding, keeping reservoirs filled almost to the brim. And when the runoff exceeded expectations it was too late to do anything but mitigate the inevitable disaster." (August 8, 1983)

Mr. Curry could have read all those in his

own Los Angeles Times. The first was written by James R. Udall, described as having "written on the river system for engineering and environmental publications," in a news analysis piece; the second, by William R. Kahrl, "the author of Water and Power: The Conflict Over Los Angeles Water Supply in the Owens Valley," also in a news analysis piece; the third by a Los Angeles Times editorial writer.

Of course, power generation was reduced and WAPA complained in the wake of the flood. The bureau had almost lost Glen Canyon Dam (see High Country News, December 12, 1983) and the emergency flood spill had broken the usual regular power generation. As for the congressional hearings, the actual record (see The Arizona Republic and the Los Angeles Times starting September 9, 1983) shows overwhelming state and local outrage at the bureau's management. One governor, for example, accused the bureau of a "monumental miscalculation." "I think Congress owes everybody a new look into the operating criteria of the river," Representative Morris K. Udall said at the time, "to see whether they should be changed."

A CBS correspondent replies

TO THE REVIEW:

In his piece about CBS News ("CBS: Sauterizing the News," CJR, March/April), Michael Massing spends a lot of time on what he variously calls trivial, mindless, silly, and superficial stories. On his "superficial" list is a beautiful piece by Charles Kuralt about a Santa Claus who delivers gifts from a helicopter to lonely people who live in lighthouses. Massing's "superficial" is most people's "warm and tender." So why not simply say: "Hey, I'm the critic around here and I don't like warm and tender."

Massing says: "Even Bruce Morton, an accomplished political analyst, now does his share of kids-and-puppy-dog stories." So what's wrong with that? There is a school of thought, after all, that says humor and tenderness serve a very important function in the news. After bombarding people with reports of death and destruction, why not end a broadcast with something light and upbeat? It says to the viewer: the world may appear to be going to hell, but we can still find some things to feel good about.

The fact is that most of what we do at CBS News is serious and important and not funny. But even a light story can be important when it touches our viewers, when it raises their spirits.

In fact, that seems to be the thinking of



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BERNARD R. GOLDBERG CBS News correspondent Miami, Fla.

That yelp from Wichita

TO THE REVIEW:

I'm reluctant to get into the middle of a dispute between CJR and an esteemed newspaper over the fairness of a Dart item, but because it was a *Changing Times* magazine article that started the whole fracas, I feel compelled to.

In its January/February issue, CJR threw a Dart at the Wichita, Kansas, Eagle-Beacon after the paper issued a next-day apology for having published a consumer story on how to get a good deal on a new-car purchase. The apology seemed to be an attempt by the paper to mollify outraged local auto dealers and avert a possible advertising boycott.

In a letter protesting the Dart award ("Unfinished Business," CIR, March/April), Eagle-Beacon executive editor Davis Merritt, Jr., said the apology had nothing to do with auto dealer threats. The article shouldn't have been printed in its original form, he wrote, because it was "patently unbalanced and therefore unfair."

The article in question was condensed from a story in *Changing Times*, a personal-finance and consumer guidance magazine that writes frequently about automotive subjects. The condensation, done by the *Changing Times* staff, was distributed last fall to every member paper of the Associated Press through a cooperative syndication venture between *Changing Times* and AP News-Features. It was approved by AP staff before distribution, and it was published intact by more than a hundred newspapers around the country.

In several cities, local auto dealers launched advertising boycotts of the papers that printed the story. A few of these boycotts lasted long enough to cost the papers substantial losses in advertising revenues. Except for the Eagle-Beacon, I have not heard of any other paper—even one suffering from an ad boycott—that retracted the article, apologized for printing it, or criticized it for being unbalanced. Editors and publishers quoted in press accounts of the boycotts were complimentary of the article as a service to their car-buying readers and were courageous in the face of commercial bullying by their local car dealers.

Standards of editorial fairness obviously vary from paper to paper, but Mr. Merritt's low regard for the *Changing Times* article appears to be a minority opinion.

KNIGHT A. KIPLINGER Editor-in-chief Changing Times Washington, D.C.

ColOmbia

TO THE REVIEW:

CNN anchorman Don Farmer ("Inside CNN," CJR, January/February) was right on target when he referred to Colombia as "a country that nobody can spell."

Sure enough, CJR got the South American nation mixed up with a well known U.S. university and misspelled it in the very same article (and in the very first mention). The Colombia/Columbia confusion on the part of U.S. editors plagues coverage of this part of the world.

BRUCE HANDLER Associated Press Chief of bureau Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Deadline

The editors welcome letters from readers. To be considered for publication in the September/October issue, letters should be received by July 18. Letters are subject to editing for clarity and space.

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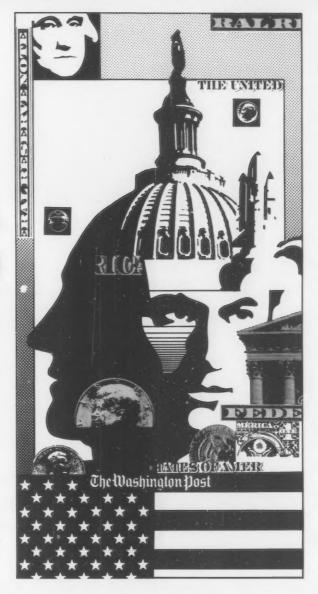
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The Lower case



Jane Weinberger has been married to Casper Weinberger, now secretary of defense, for some 40 years

Kenosha News 5/29/86

The second, a whimsical number titled "London Derriere," was heralded by Karr as his salute to St. Patrick's Day.

The Charleston (W.Va.) Gazette 3/17/86

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South Dakota State University Collegian 3/5/86

Panel on Homosexuals Says Governor Is Losing Interest

Old Bridge restricts outdoor water use; 2 plants break down

The Central New Jersey Home News 5/20/86

Blind girl servives first round of bee

Indiana (Pa.) Gazette 5/29/86

The New York Times 2/11/86

Fish fights migraines

Vancouver, B.C. Province 5/16/86

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